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Mercredi
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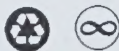
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 September 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 septembre 2017

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPRESENTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 152, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2015 and certain other Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale et d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I really appreciate the opportunity for me to speak on this bill. I want to say at the outset that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation on this leadoff debate.

Good morning, everyone. Speaker, I rise in the House today to open debate on a bill that would, if passed, ensure a stronger voice for northern Ontarians in the provincial Legislature.

Ontario's north is known for its strong contributions to the diversity of our wonderful province, but also as a distinctive culture and as an important driver of Ontario's economy. Because of the north, we are a global leader in the resource and mining sector, which supports tens of thousands of jobs. As we continue to grow opportunities in the far north, our government is committed to working closely with the people who live and work there. That includes municipalities, indigenous and francophone communities, as well as local businesses. They are the most knowledgeable and the best suited to tell us what we as a government are doing right, what needs to change, and how to get there.

Speaker, despite the many achievements and contributions of northern Ontarians, effective representation in this Legislature is a real and persistent issue for northerners and their representatives alike. We often hear from people in remote northern communities who feel that they just don't have a voice here at Queen's Park, many of whom are francophone; many are indigenous. The people in these communities bring an important

cultural, economic and historical perspective on the key issues to all of Ontario, whether we are talking about where schools and hospitals should be built, or what opportunities we should pursue to create jobs and make investments in our future. These voices need to be heard loud and clear at Queen's Park.

As all of the members here can certainly appreciate, every riding, and in fact every community, has its own set of unique needs. Northern Ontario, Speaker, is no exception; however, there are very real challenges that make effective representation in the Far North especially difficult. A big part of this challenge is the enormous size of the ridings that these remote northern communities are in.

There are currently only two ridings in Ontario's Far North: Kenora–Rainy River, and Timmins–James Bay. They are by far the largest in the province. Speaker, we've heard often about those ridings from the members who represent those ridings, who often talk about the challenges that they have to work through in order to represent these very large ridings. In fact, either of these ridings alone is larger than some European countries. Add to that fact that these regions also contain a vast number of different people, cultures and traditions, with priorities and concerns that may be different from other ridings in the province.

Take something as simple as building a new school. If, for example, a new school were to be built in Timmins, I know it would make a big difference for that community. But others in that same riding, say, families in Moosonee, would not see any change. As you can see, it is extremely difficult to effectively represent everybody's different priorities and interests at once in these ridings. Each community has their own major roads, their own schools, and consequently, their own needs.

Speaker, while effective representation is very important in our democracy, people also need to feel that they're being represented effectively. In my own riding of Ottawa Centre, if one of my constituents wants to chat, it won't take them too long to find me. It won't take too long for me to get to where they may live in the neighbourhood, where they are working, or for them to simply come to my community office. But I can assure you, and I think members in this House know, up north, it is not that easy. You could travel across every riding along the 401 corridor—over 30 ridings, in fact—in the time it takes to travel from one end of Kenora–Rainy River to the other.

Frankly, in communities that are geographically isolated, it's easy to feel politically isolated as well. While my colleagues from the Far North all do an

admirable job of representing their constituents, I'm sure they would agree that for folks living in Sandy Lake or other communities, Queen's Park must seem like an incredibly distant, out-of-reach place.

I believe that fairness in representation cannot just be measured by the number of people in a riding. If we do not take into account issues of culture, geography and communities of interest in electoral districts, then we set up a decision-making process that won't value these interests either.

Speaker, our government is and has always been committed to representation across the province. Back in 2004, if you recall, the federal government reduced the number of federal seats in northern Ontario from 11 to 10. We disagreed with that decision, and Ontario responded by preserving 11 northern ridings. First of all, as I've always said, I do not believe that fair and effective representation can be calculated through a simple population count. There are plenty of different factors that must be considered, and the only sure way to account for those is to give the people a voice in the process.

In 2015, the federal government enacted changes to increase ridings in southern Ontario by 15. They did this to more accurately reflect the population changes of ridings in areas including Kitchener, Hamilton, Halton, Brampton, Mississauga, Simcoe, York, Toronto, Ottawa, Belleville and Durham. Speaker, these areas, as you are no doubt aware, have seen considerable population growth over the last decade. Ontario aligned the provincial ridings in southern Ontario with the boundaries that had been set at the federal level. This adjustment split up some of the most densely populated ridings in the province, giving a stronger voice to people in areas such as the greater Toronto area, or the GTA. It has also improved overall representation across the province, increasing the number of southern ridings from 96 to 111, in time for the scheduled 2018 election.

But the north was one area where we still did not see eye to eye with the federal government. That was one of our priorities back in 2015, and it remains one to this day. It is important to think about the diversity of the communities in northern Ontario, and how, despite population considerations, there are issues that can complicate representation for certain communities. With this in mind, we continued to think about how we could further improve representation in the north.

0910

Last year, as we prepared to introduce a range of measures to modernize and improve our election processes, we saw another opportunity to address the important and long-standing issue of representation in the Far North. We recognized that it would be no easy task. Changes would have to be made carefully and independently of any political party. That's why we created the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, an independent commission with a mandate to research, consult with communities, and make recommendations on the creation of at least one, and no more than two new ridings in Ontario's Far North. Speaker, an independent,

non-partisan commission was absolutely the best way to go. It ensured that the process was fair, impartial and focused on local needs.

The commission was tasked specifically with looking at electoral boundaries in Ontario's two northernmost districts—Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay—and to make sure that any changes would directly reflect the priorities and needs of the people living in the affected areas. It paid special attention to factors such as communities of interest; representation of indigenous people; municipal and other administrative boundaries; the sparsity, density and rate of population growth; geographical features; the availability and accessibility of means of communication and transportation; representation by northern members and other interested people; and, of course, anything else that the commission deemed to be appropriate in their deliberations.

The commission's findings from its work and consultations were outlined in a preliminary and a final report, which contained recommendations on the new boundaries in Ontario's Far North.

To ensure the independence and integrity of the process, the government was obligated by law to introduce legislation implementing the electoral districts recommended by the commission. Speaker, we met this obligation when the bill currently under discussion was introduced on September 12.

In the Far North, making a trip to visit constituents in their riding can mean several days on the road or costly and infrequent flights. I am sure many members have had the opportunity to visit the Far North in the two ridings we are speaking of. I think all of us have definitely been to Timmins and Kenora. I've had the opportunity, in my capacity as a minister of the crown, to visit a few communities in the Far North. I think anybody who has travelled to these communities will recognize the uniqueness of Ontario's Far North in terms of just the natural beauty and the ecosystem that exists in the area, but also the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member is in the middle of his speech. It's quite loud and it's in the background.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, also, the distances that are involved: I won't forget my trip to Sachigo Lake—I think it's in Kenora–Rainy River—flying from Thunder Bay in a plane. You're flying over this vast land. I think it was in February, and so you're just seeing snow, just this white, but you see the beautiful rivers and lakes connecting. You see the trees, but for a distance, that's just what you see; you see this absolutely beautiful land with no people living on it. Coming from southern Ontario, coming from obviously living in urban neighbourhoods, it's a bit of a unique sight, and it's a very beautiful sight. But I always recall, as you're flying, in the distance you start seeing a bit of a speck on the horizon. As you get closer, you recognize that there is a small community of a few hundred people who live in the community. As you fly in closer and closer, you see

the homes and you see pretty much a landing strip—in that instance, when I went to Sachigo Lake—which you land on. That's the point of connectivity, that landing strip. Then you go in the community and spend a few hours and time with the local residents, the indigenous community. You learn about the issues, and you work with them on the issues that are important, and you get on a plane and you take off.

It's an experience like no other. Really, that and other trips have always left an impression on me around the beauty and the vastness, and the warmth of the people who live in the communities, but also how different the realities are between those of us who live in southern Ontario versus communities in the north, and particularly the Far North.

Of course, our local MPPs from the areas know this reality, they live this reality, and they serve their community in an honourable way, even though the geography is so different. For these MPPs, travelling must seem like a full-time job at times—to me, it does. As I said, for me, commuting in my riding is a far easier task than I would think it is for the members from Timmins—James Bay or Kenora—Rainy River or other northern boundaries, in terms of the distances they have to travel.

In May, the independent Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission took on the challenge of reaching out to people far and wide across the north. Throughout the spring, the commissioners travelled to remote and urban areas across the Far North to hear what people had to say about their representation at Queen's Park. The response was incredible. The overwhelming consensus the commissioners heard was to create two additional ridings in the Far North, for a total of four where previously there were only two. As I mentioned earlier, the needs of communities in the Far North vary across such vast geography. The commissioners heard this in their consultations. After careful consideration, they recommended this approach in their final report.

Before I talk more about the commission's recommendations, I would just like to take a moment to acknowledge the five members of the commission for the work they did. As I have said, they have each put months of hard work into compiling not one but two reports, in addition to two separate rounds of consultation.

As you will recall, Speaker, several members of the commission were here at the Legislature earlier last week to see the introduction of this bill. I had the opportunity to speak to them just before and after the introduction. I can tell you they were tremendously proud of the work they've done, of the opportunity they got to interact with the local communities, and the kind of impression that has left on them. It was quite heartwarming to hear their impressions of the experience they had gone through. All these people are highly qualified, and I'll mention that in a moment.

They are no strangers to the north, but despite all of that, given the scope of the project, given the intensity of the work and the timelines that were provided to them through this Legislature, it was remarkable to see the

kind of people they have become in the whole process, and it was an amazing opportunity for me to have that conversation with them.

Speaker, I would like to thank and acknowledge the members for their work, including the Honourable Justice Joyce Pelletier of the Ontario Court of Justice, who chaired the commission. In addition to her professional qualifications, she provided an important perspective, as she is of Ojibway heritage, from Fort William First Nation.

As we all know, Greg Essensa, who was part of the commission, is the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario. Of course, he brought his vast experience as somebody who runs Elections Ontario. What it takes to operate elections and other day-to-day affairs around these ridings, from an electoral perspective, of course, was very helpful.

Michael Pal is an assistant professor at the University of Ottawa who specializes in the areas of electoral and constitutional law, so it was good to have that expertise in the commission.

We also had Theresa Hall, who is not only a former justice of the peace but also the former chief of Attawapiskat First Nation. Theresa is of Mushkegowuk heritage from the Attawapiskat First Nation and, of course, she brought her tremendous knowledge of the communities.

Eric Fisher, who is also a former chief and was a council member of Wabaseemoong Whitedog Independent Nations, is also of Ojibway heritage. These are all remarkable individuals.

0920

Like I said, I had the opportunity to spend some time with Justice Pelletier, Greg Essensa and Michael Pal, who visited the Legislature on September 12, and to hear their perspective. Unfortunately, Theresa Hall and Eric Fisher were not able to attend the tabling of the legislation. It was really heartening to see the conviction from which they operated and how they felt really engaged in this process, and their full knowledge and conviction around the report that they have tabled which is being brought forward by way of this legislation.

Certainly, a distinctive feature of the commission was that the majority of the members came from indigenous backgrounds. This was a perspective I am glad played a prominent role in their research and discussion. Each commissioner provided a depth of experience and understanding that was invaluable to this review and the discussions they held with people across the Far North. I'm confident in the work and the advice they have provided to this House.

In view of this good work, as well as the obligation of the government to introduce legislation to implement the commission's recommendations, this bill, if passed, would make the entirety of the recommendations in their final report a reality.

Speaker, with your permission, I would now like to talk in depth about the proposed changes that this legislation would enact. As recommended by the commission, this bill will seek to create a total of four

ridings in the Far North where currently there are only two. They will include Kiiwetinoong, Mushkegowuk, Kenora–Rainy River and the city of Timmins.

First of all, splitting the Far North into four smaller, separate ridings makes a lot of sense. The new ridings of Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk have a majority indigenous and a majority francophone population, respectively. This is incredibly important as it will strengthen representation for these communities at Queen's Park.

Speaker, I am going to apologize in advance for my pronunciation of the names of these two ridings. I do undertake to work hard to get the pronunciation right and I think it's important for all of us. I'm sure, as these new ridings are created and we have members elected, we will all work very hard to make sure that we are properly pronouncing the names of these ridings because they're important and they have meanings, as I will speak to in a moment.

The new riding of Kiiwetinoong would be 68% indigenous; Mushkegowuk's population would be about 27% indigenous and about 60% francophone.

To acknowledge the lands on which these ridings are located, the commission selected indigenous names for each. "Kiiwetinoong" is the Ojibway word for "north," and in Swampy Cree, "Mushkegowuk" roughly translates as "people of the swamp land."

The population of the new Kenora–Rainy River riding would be about one quarter indigenous. To make this new riding, the boundaries of the former Kenora–Rainy River riding would be adjusted to include places such as Dryden, Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River but not the more northerly part of the former riding.

As we all know, urban interests are very different from those of the more remote communities. For that reason, among others, the city of Timmins would be separated into its own riding as well. As a stand-alone riding, the urban interests of the city of Timmins would be represented independently from other, more remote communities in the Far North such as those included in Mushkegowuk.

In addition to representing the unique needs of the urban and remote communities that make up Ontario's Far North, these smaller, more manageable ridings will make it possible for northern MPPs to more effectively reach and represent their constituents at Queen's Park. If passed, our intention is to have the proposed new ridings in place for the scheduled June 2018 election.

I would also like to take a few minutes to speak to some of the other measures we're proposing in this bill, which would help to clarify or strengthen previous changes to the rules and processes around our elections. As you will recall, last year we transformed the province's election financing rules to make Ontario's system among the strongest and most transparent in Canada. The legislation that we passed and enacted included new rules about who can make contributions, how much they can donate, and created tough new restrictions on attendance at fundraisers for politicians and their staff.

The bill before you seeks to further refine the rules restricting political actors from attending fundraising

events. We are looking to provide clarity on what activities the rules are seeking to restrict and to whom they apply. In response to a recommendation by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, if passed, this bill would allow the prescribed political actors to attend certain meetings where the ticket price includes a political contribution, like annual general meetings and policy conferences that are held by political parties and their constituency associations. These meetings are considered important opportunities for all in the political world to meet and interact with those they represent or would like to represent in the Legislative Assembly, and they give political actors the opportunity to engage in policy discussions that impact their communities.

Speaker, this bill would also clarify the exemption allowing political actors to attend cost-recovery events. Under the proposed rules, this would be permitted only if the event has been advertised as such.

As I've noted before, we are not only concerned with situations where access is being granted in exchange for cash. Even the perception of impropriety can be harmful to our democratic institutions. Clarity is essential to maintaining the public trust.

This bill would also make one additional change to the new fundraising rules. As the members will recall, under the rules that were passed last year, both nomination contestants and registered candidates are restricted from attending fundraising events. However, the bill did not account for the gap period between the time that a nomination has been won but the person is not yet an official candidate because the writ has not yet been issued. By closing this gap, we would ensure that the policy goal of banning cash for access is applied to people through all stages of seeking office.

We are also proposing to change the legislation to extend the period nomination contestants can fundraise to pay off some of their campaign debts. This change treats nomination contestants similarly to candidates by permitting them to receive contributions for three months after the vote.

Finally, we're proposing an amendment allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to share information with the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., or MPAC. As the members know, MPAC is responsible for assembling the voter lists that are used in Ontario's municipal elections. If passed, this bill would modernize election processes by allowing data from the permanent register of electors to be shared with MPAC for electoral purposes. This is a quick and effective way to provide MPAC with a more accurate voters list in time for the 2018 municipal elections, making it easier for voters to get the information they need to participate in municipal elections. It would also ensure that we maximize the benefits from all the great work that Elections Ontario does to keep current and accurate voter rolls.

Speaker, in conclusion, I just want to say that this bill before you today is an important step forward for northern Ontario and for our election system. As you know, we have made great strides forward over the past year to

reform and modernize our election system, but our election system is only as strong as the faith people have in it. I'm confident that these changes will strengthen the faith northern Ontarians have in their representation here at Queen's Park. The changes we are proposing today, taken together with other recent reforms, would help to build a more modern and representative election system across the province and strengthen our democracy for all Ontarians.

The creation of two new ridings, with at least one of the ridings having majority indigenous population representation, is an important step, not only to ensure that we have effective representation for all communities in the north, but also in our journey of reconciliation with the indigenous people. It is important that we have representation that is close or if not in fact part of those indigenous communities, and that those voices are heard loud and clear in this House. As we work towards reconciliation—as we all are committed to in the House—I think this is one very important step in enhancing our democratic institutions and making sure that we've got a direct, effective voice of those communities right in the House speaking on their behalf so that we can make decisions that accurately and directly address the concerns and the issues that are faced by members of those communities.

0930

I hope that all members will support this important bill. I definitely do.

I once again want to thank the members of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission for the work they've done. They were given a fairly tight timeline, but they responded. They worked extremely hard. They talked to many, many communities and many, many people, and have given us a blueprint, a report that, in my view, an implementation of which, if the legislation is passed, would result in a stronger democracy in our province and definitely far stronger and effective representation of members of communities from the Far North.

Speaker, I would now invite my colleague—as I had stated right at the outset of starting the debate, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation—and I would pass the floor to him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm very happy to follow the Attorney General's set of remarks, which were informative, helpful and set the rationale for what this legislation is doing.

Toronto is located on the traditional territory of indigenous peoples dating back countless generations, as is the entire province of Ontario, and I do show my respect for the role of treaty-making in what is now Ontario. Hundreds of years after these first treaties were signed, they are still relevant today. Part of the intent of those treaties is creating ways of living together by which everyone can thrive. I would like everyone here today to keep that in mind as I speak in support of the northern boundaries bill introduced by the Attorney General.

This legislation proposes to implement the recommendations of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. I do want to thank the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission for its work to ensure that our electoral system remains relevant to representing Ontario's northernmost communities. The commission's recommendations are thoughtful and they're informed by the perspectives that were shared by northern communities, including indigenous peoples, during the various public consultations. I am confident that the recommendations reflect the commission's very best assessment of the unique needs of Ontario's north.

As I have said, Ontario is committed to improving representation for all people living in the north. As the Attorney General has stated, the proposed legislation would adjust the electoral boundaries in the geographic area currently occupied by Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay. It would create two additional ridings in that space and make necessary consequential amendments.

I do want to stress that the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission was an independent commission. It was tasked by the government with looking at ways to improve the electoral representation for people living in northern communities, many of whom are indigenous peoples. I do believe that the commission has done this with integrity and respect.

Let me say a word about the demographics of those areas. As the commission notes, the provincial electoral districts of Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay are geographically vast, with smaller population numbers than those in southern Ontario, but the people and communities in the electoral districts are diverse, including anglophones, First Nations, francophones, and Métis. I'm speaking here today because so many people in northern Ontario belong to First Nations and Métis communities, and as I am the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, I have a special responsibility in these areas.

We do want to improve indigenous representation. It was a very important consideration for the independent commission in determining the new electoral boundaries. The electoral district of Kenora–Rainy River has a population of just over 85,000, 40% of whom are indigenous. According to the 2017 INAC on-reserve data—INAC is the indigenous and northern affairs ministry in Ottawa—there are 98 reserves and 52 First Nations in this area. The Timmins–James Bay electoral district has a population of more than 71,000, 17% of whom are indigenous. There are 10 reserves and eight First Nations within the geographic area of Timmins–James Bay.

Under the current boundaries, indigenous communities often do not have a majority voice over certain aspects of their political affairs. One of the reasons I support this legislation is, the new proposed boundaries will create a situation in which indigenous voters in Ontario's north can have a greater voice in issues relevant to them. For example, one of the new proposed boundaries, Mushkegowuk, will have indigenous and francophone popula-

tions that together comprise about 87% of the population. The proposed new riding of Kiiwetinoong will have a majority of 68% indigenous population.

Let me say a word about treaties. This is not just about influence at the ballot box. Earlier, I included a traditional greeting for the land we are on. I did this out of respect and as a reminder of the agreement that allows us to be here today. Similarly, I would like to speak of the treaties that relate to the areas that are included in this proposed legislation, as well as the First Nations that are signatories to those agreements. Three treaties cover the areas of these two electoral districts: Treaty 9, signed in 1905-06, with an additional adhesion in 1929; Treaty 3, signed in 1873; and Treaty 5, signed in 1875.

Treaty 9, also known as the James Bay Treaty, covers almost two thirds of northern Ontario. Treaty 9 encompasses the entire electoral district of Timmins-James Bay, as well as the northern and central-eastern areas of the Kenora-Rainy River electoral district. The political territorial organization Nishnawbe Aski Nation, also known as NAN, represents the 49 First Nation communities encompassed within Treaty 9 as well as the communities within Ontario's portion of Treaty 5. This is an area that totals more than 500,000 square kilometres.

Treaty 3 encompasses the geographic area west of Thunder Bay, totalling 142,000 square kilometres. It stretches from Ontario's border with Minnesota, to north of Sioux Lookout and west to the Manitoba border. Grand Council Treaty 3 is the traditional government of the Anishnawbe Nation within Treaty 3 territory. Grand Council Treaty 3 represents the 28 First Nation communities covered by Treaty 3.

There are also a number of Métis communities in northern Ontario. Métis have their own unique way of life, with distinct culture, traditions and understandings of nationhood. Métis played a significant role in the province's treaty history. Throughout their history, Métis have actively asserted their rights and advocated for protection of the land. I am pleased that the commission took Métis culture and concerns into consideration in making its recommendations, as well as the treaties in those areas. This is an important part of demonstrating our government's commitment to honouring these relevant treaties.

0940

Let me say a few words about indigenous voices. Proposing this legislation is one of the ways in which we are building stronger relationships with indigenous communities. I am confident that, if passed, the proposed new ridings will take that further by helping to improve political representation for these indigenous communities in Ontario's north. I am confident of this because of the commission's process and structure, which included indigenous voices. The commission was specifically mandated to consider representation of indigenous peoples in making its recommendations. I believe it has carried out that task.

As is stated in the commission's preliminary report, it viewed indigenous feedback as a particular priority in

their work. I understand that the commission endeavoured to provide as many opportunities as possible for indigenous peoples to share their perspectives.

During the first round of engagement sessions, the hearings were held in nine First Nation communities. Members of the commission also attended the spring assemblies of NAN, Grand Council Treaty 3 and the Chiefs of Ontario meeting. In addition to participating in the spring assemblies, the commission also operated an information booth during the Chiefs of Ontario summer assembly in Lac Seul First Nation. Indigenous voices also comprised the majority of the commission itself; three of the commissioners, including the chair, are indigenous.

I would like to offer this very specific example of how indigenous leadership and participation in the commission affected the recommendations. In its preliminary report, the commission recommended moving Marten Falls First Nation into the proposed new riding of Kiiwetinoong. There, it would share a common language and history with the riding's residents. In its final report, the commission encouraged the Legislature to reach out to the community to discuss its preferred riding. Outreach to Marten Falls on this issue resulted in the chief advising us that the community wished to remain in Mushkegowuk.

Let me say a few words now about northern considerations. I do support the commission's recommendations and the proposed northern boundaries bill for other reasons as well. Northern communities possess unique qualities that make these proposed boundary changes important—because these new electoral districts, if passed, would allow greater political representation to address regional factors. These factors include a sparse population, communication challenges, fly-in-only communities and the importance of indigenous language.

There are also unique geographical considerations. The physical terrain is made up of extensive rivers, lakes, wetlands, natural resources and forests, and contains two distinct ecological regions: the dense boreal forest of the Canadian Shield and the bogs and fens of the Hudson Bay lowlands. These factors were crucial considerations for the commission.

With these factors in mind, the commission's recommendations strike the right balance between voter parity and other criteria for effective representation that apply under section 3 of the charter. My primary focus today, however, is the unique factors that apply to indigenous communities in these areas of northern Ontario.

Let me say a few words about culture and reconciliation. This includes the cultures of those indigenous communities and how they relate to Ontario's commitment to reconciliation. As the commission points out, the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission called attention to Canada's long-standing and damaging history of colonialism in relation to its indigenous peoples. Past federal and provincial governments have left deep scars on the lives of many indigenous peoples, indigenous communities and, more broadly, on Canadian and Ontario society.

Since the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, there have been many calls for a national reconciliation framework, bringing renewed attention to the importance of recognizing and respecting the unique cultures, rights and needs of indigenous peoples.

In consideration of its recommendations, the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission further points out that reconciliation has been defined “as an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships” which “involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change.” It goes on. Reconciliation “also requires the revitalization of indigenous law and legal traditions. It is important that all Canadians understand how ... First Nations, Inuit, and Métis approaches to resolving conflict, repairing harm, and restoring relationships can inform the reconciliation process.”

I am pleased that a commitment to reconciliation was reflected in the composition, operations and mandate of the commission, as well as the recommendations that have led to this proposed legislation.

To reiterate: Three of the five commissioners are indigenous, including the chair. This is the first electoral boundary commission in Ontario and Canadian history with a majority of indigenous members.

The commission operated with the goal of reconciliation in mind, and, as detailed in its final report, engaged extensively with indigenous communities, chiefs and councils in its decision-making.

The statutory mandate of the commission explicitly required them to consider representation of indigenous peoples. They were aware—and I will remind us all now—of why this is so important. Historically, indigenous groups, including First Nation peoples and Inuit, were precluded from voting in the Canadian electoral system. Prior to 1960, status Indians, as defined by the Indian Act, could vote in federal elections only if they chose to forfeit their Indian status and met other specific qualifications. Prior to 1954, Ontario was one of three provinces to impose racial restrictions on voting eligibility, where only “enfranchised Indians” living off-reserve and owning real property, were permitted to vote. After this was statutorily changed, section 3 of the charter enshrined all citizens’ rights to vote, including Métis, First Nation, and Inuit. This happened in 1982 with the advent of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As the commission points out, the history of indigenous suffrage is therefore part of a broader discussion of issues relating to the exclusion, inclusion and participation of indigenous peoples in the electoral system, to self-determination and sovereignty, and to the concept of citizenship.

The commission further states, and I agree, that enhanced political representation for indigenous peoples in Ontario’s political system is a necessary component of the broader movement toward reconciliation.

I believe, Speaker, that the proposed northern boundaries bill, if passed, will help acknowledge the diverse views within indigenous communities with regard to participation in the provincial electoral system.

More importantly, according to the commission, many of the indigenous peoples they met were strongly in favour of enhanced representation at Queen’s Park.

The commission also recognized—and I recognize—that some indigenous people were ambivalent about involvement in provincial elections because they view the federal crown as their treaty partner in the nation-to-nation relationship.

I am pleased that the commission respectfully took these views into consideration, and I do agree with their conclusion that taking concrete action to improve representation of indigenous peoples in the provincial Legislature is not only part of the commission’s statutory mandate; it is also a vital step on the path to reconciliation. The northern boundaries bill, if passed, will achieve that, Speaker.

0950

Let me say a few words now about language and reconciliation. Another key part of Ontario’s path to reconciliation, as my ministry outlines in the document *The Journey Together*, is supporting the revitalization of indigenous cultures. One of the most insidious mandates of the residential school system was the deliberate destruction of indigenous cultures. In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report, cultural genocide is described as “the destruction of ... structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group.”

Language is the foundation of culture, and residential schools actively forbade children from speaking their own language. Indigenous peoples in particular have a very strong attachment to the tradition of oral histories. The commission, I am glad to share, recognized the importance of indigenous languages as it developed its recommendations. It mapped out the dominant indigenous language groups in the electoral districts of Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay through public information meetings and ongoing discussions with indigenous commission members Eric Fisher and Theresa Hall.

In Kenora–Rainy River, there are three distinct indigenous language groups: Ojibway, Oji-Cree, and Cree. Cree is the main indigenous language in the Timmins–James Bay area. Weenusk, Attawapiskat, Kashechewan and Fort Albany First Nations all speak the same dialect of Cree, known as Swampy Cree, as does the urban indigenous population in the southern portion of the electoral district. A separate dialect of Cree, known as Moose Cree, is spoken in Moose Cree. Marten Falls First Nation, which I spoke of earlier, is the only community in the district whose dominant indigenous language is not Cree but, rather, Ojibway.

The attention that the commission paid to indigenous language is one of the reasons I support its findings in determining the new boundaries for the proposed electoral districts.

Let me say a couple of words about the transportation issues.

Transportation was also among the many considerations of the commission when it made its recommendations. I would like to speak to this point, providing some of the commission's findings, as I discuss how this affects indigenous communities.

First Nations make up more than 90% of the population of the Far North, with most living in remote, fly-in communities. The communities rely on 29 remote airports to provide vital access to the rest of the province, as well as to transport people and goods. Weather issues frequently affect air travel in the north due to considerations related to fog, storms, floods, fires, ice and extreme temperatures.

During the winter months, fly-in communities, with support from provincial and federal governments, construct and maintain a system of winter roads. Combined, the winter roads total more than 3,000 kilometres. The winter roads link 30 First Nation communities to the provincial highway or rail system for approximately 10 to 12 weeks per year. This winter roads network is crucial to transporting supplies and bulk cargo into the communities during those months, which can't otherwise get there in the summer.

The winter road access for the communities of Weenusk and Fort Severn First Nation is to Manitoba. However, as the commission took into consideration, there are many problems facing the development and maintenance of winter roads. They include problems of poor signage, minimal cellphone coverage and limited real-time information on road conditions. Additionally, climate change and fluctuating temperatures are shortening the winter road season and making the roads more vulnerable to intermittent closures. Combined, these factors make driving conditions dangerous and unreliable.

While there are some all-season roads in Ontario's Far North, currently the most northerly municipality that has access to an all-season road is Pickle Lake. As a result, most First Nation communities do rely on winter road access.

The limited road infrastructure in Ontario's Far North intensifies the costs, the uncertainty and the availability of northern travel, food, and other goods, and professional services—health, policing and other services—as well as impacting the ability to travel for medical purposes.

In addition, other factors, including physical terrain, environmental conservation, differing perspectives and varying degree of consensus among the communities, and complications arising from multiple funding sources, further challenge Far North communities as they try to optimize existing roads and to build new transportation infrastructure.

I believe strengthening the political representation in these ridings will help to address these issues. I want to repeat that statement; that is perhaps the most important thought in this set of remarks: I believe strengthening the political representation in these proposed ridings will help to address these many issues.

Speaker, in conclusion, to this end and for the reasons that I have spoken of today, I endorse the recommendations of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. I believe that, if passed, this legislation will lead us further on the road to reconciliation, as it helps us honour treaty agreements, strengthens First Nations and Métis culture, and contributes to addressing infrastructure challenges that these communities face by giving them a stronger political voice.

I look forward to voting in favour of the northern boundaries bill introduced by the Attorney General. I encourage all MPPs in this Legislature to support this legislation, to consider the reasons that I have given for supporting this legislation, the reasons why this legislation is important, the reasons why this will contribute to reconciliation and the reasons why this will contribute to political fairness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the Attorney General and to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs for your comments.

Our leader has said numerous times that there is no monopoly on a good idea. I believe that the addition of these two new ridings in northern Ontario is a good idea. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to see even more ridings in the north. Anything we can do to provide greater representation for our northern communities and anything we can do to promote greater representation for our indigenous peoples is a good thing and it's a good start, and I hope this is only the first step towards encouraging and enhancing even greater representation for northern communities and indigenous peoples.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Kenora—Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Northerners welcome changes that will increase our access to Queen's Park, a place located some 2,000 kilometres away from our home in northwestern Ontario, a place which often ends up imposing its views and will upon us without care or consideration for our needs. This historical reality has left us feeling disenfranchised and alienated, often likened to a colony of a larger, self-serving, paternalistic empire that seems to only pay attention to us long enough to strip us of our resources. Fourteen years of this Liberal government's ignorant northern policies have fostered renewed calls for northern separation, which will not be undone by the creation of two new northern ridings.

What's needed are meaningful changes on the part of this government, starting with meaningful northern consultation and engagement that empowers northerners to be part of this decision-making process. Instead, what we continue to get from this Liberal government is more of its same self-serving shenanigans where it hastily creates a commission charged with strengthening the democracy in a region that comprises one third of the provincial land mass, then gives commissioners three months to consult, research and propose changes, so that the resulting bill can be rammed through the Legislature in time for it to

become law and take effect in advance of the next election.

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Never mind the fact that this is a tall enough order; the government also expects candidate searches to be conducted by each of the parties and fundraising to take place in an area where the unemployment rates can be 50% or more in many of these communities, and then expects candidates to campaign in an area that will likely still rival the country of Germany in terms of size—and to do so at a time when travel by road is non-existent.

So my question is, how is any of this really, truly improving democracy? How is it respecting the needs and concerns of northerners? In this case, it's a matter of mother knows best, but is that materially any different from the old way of father knows best?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, there are a number of issues that have been raised by my colleague the Attorney General, and I can't address all of them, but one of the things he talked about, and it has been talked about by all the members, is the issue of representation in northern Ontario.

I had the privilege of travelling with Premier Wynne when she travelled through northwestern Ontario this summer, meeting some of our First Nations people and visiting some of the First Nations communities—Webequie, Shoal Lake 39, Shoal Lake 40—and learned a tremendous amount about some of the challenges faced in those communities and how important effective representation is. So I won't repeat the comments made, but suffice it to say that we need to make sure that all communities across Ontario are well represented, and I applaud any efforts to do just that.

I also think there are some good, common-sense changes in this bill. Some of the changes that have been made that haven't been commented on yet are the sharing of information with MPAC to make sure the electoral rolls are accurate and representative—and I think we've all been involved in campaigns where lists are out of date or names aren't accurate or people who are on the list shouldn't be on the list. So those kinds of things help to make a list more accurate and more reliable, and I think that's a good thing for everybody concerned and good for democracy.

There have been some changes proposed in this legislation to fundraising. There are some good, common-sense changes here. For example, this legislation would allow political actors, MPPs etc. to attend meetings where the ticket price includes a political contribution—events like annual general meetings or political conferences. This is just a good, common-sense thing to make sure that we can engage with members of our respective parties and stakeholders, so I'm glad that's in there. This bill also clarifies exemptions—allowing political actors to attend cost-recovery events. I think these clarifications are helpful.

So I think there are a lot of good pieces to this legislation, and I hope all members of the House will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I can't tell you, first of all, how thrilled I am to hear us talking so wonderfully about northern Ontario today. It's a vast, vast land, and it is unbelievably beautiful. I would encourage more of the members to actually get up into the north and have a look at how we live and how we do business in northern Ontario, because, quite frankly, it is different.

To that point, I'm hoping that the Attorney General will consider some of the rules of the Legislature, in terms of our standing orders, in terms of travelling to the north. It's very difficult. I've been to the Ring of Fire and Webequie five times now, and it's very difficult, under the current rules, for members to get there, to charter an aircraft, when you're not one of the eight northern members in that certain category of the 11 northern members that there are. It's very difficult for any member of the Legislative Assembly to travel by charter throughout the north, and perhaps that's the reason why so many have not come to see our northern Ontario.

One comment that I would make is where we heard the Attorney General talk about the Election Finances Act and this—we know now, obviously, that they rushed through the Election Finances Act. They made so many mistakes in it that they're now backtracking and have slipped this in. They're using this bill to slip in major changes. There's no shock there. They bungled it so badly the first time, by rushing this through when they got caught in the campaign finance scandal, that they're using this bill to make changes to their Election Finances Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General has two minutes.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie, Kenora—Rainy River, Etobicoke Centre, and Nipissing for their comments, and of course I want to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for his substantive remarks on this very important piece of legislation—in fact, a historic piece of legislation.

I do want to take a moment to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for his tireless work on the very important issue of reconciliation with indigenous people. The minister has been travelling to communities across the province. I think he has been to every single community—if not, almost every single indigenous community in this province. It probably has never been done before by any minister of the crown. It's definitely a remarkable first. It allows him to do his job that much more effectively.

I can tell you, Speaker, that in conversations with him and hearing him speak at cabinet and in other important discussions, when it comes to talking about reconciliation in terms of making sure that our indigenous communities get the services they so much deserve for their well-being

and growth, this minister is there working hard day in and day out.

This legislation is very much part and parcel of that journey to reconciliation and making sure that we've got those strong voices, those effective voices of our indigenous communities right here in this House so they are making decisions along with them. This is paying respect and putting meaning to a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship that must exist, as is enshrined in our Constitution, with our indigenous people.

This is not a political bill. This is a bill that will enhance and strengthen our democracy, and I encourage all members to please support this so that we've got these two new ridings set up for the June 2018 election.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1006 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today, with us, we have, in the public gallery, grade 10 students from Neil McNeil secondary school and grades 11 and 12 students from Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute participating in our very first Democracy Day program put on by the protocol office of the Legislature of Ontario. Please join me in welcoming the students from those two high schools. Thank you for being here.

Also, in the Speaker's gallery today, we have several guests who are here to honour Lyn McLeod, who is receiving the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians' Distinguished Service Award for 2017. With her are Jim Brownell, former MPP for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would love for us to hold our applause, because there's a list—Karen Haslam, former MPP for Perth; Jean-Marc Lalonde, former MPP for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell; Judy Marsales, former MPP for Hamilton West; Douglas Moffatt, chair of the Distinguished Service Award committee and former MPP for Durham East; George Smitherman, former MPP for Toronto Centre; former Speaker David Warner, who is the chair of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians and former MPP for Scarborough-Ellesmere, and he is accompanied by his wife, Patricia.

Join me in welcoming those former members who have joined us today to pay tribute to Lyn.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also here to accompany Lyn are her family members and friends: Dara McLeod, Dana Wright, Grace Wright, Kristen McLeod, Ewan Price, Kieran Price, Aila Price, and friends Rheal Filion and Gardner Sage. Welcome to the House.

And last but not least, a friend to all, Lyn McLeod.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Therefore, it is time for other introductions.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to introduce today to the Legislature guests from Sarnia-Lambton: President Ryan Gibbs of OPSEU Local 125 and the treasurer for that local, Candace Young, from Lambton College in Sarnia-Lambton. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I had breakfast this morning with a faculty member from the Thames campus of St. Clair College in Chatham. I'd like to welcome Kent McLain to Queen's Park. Welcome, Kent.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm pleased to welcome here today Kanwar Sandhu, who is a member of the Legislative Assembly of Punjab, along with Dr. Balwinder Singh, who is part of the South Asian media here in Toronto.

Up in the visitors' gallery, I see members of the Panna Hill Seniors Club.

Welcome to everyone. I wanted to welcome everyone here today.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to welcome Eric Bauer, who is a professor at Loyalist College in Belleville, in the environmental program. Welcome, Eric.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my delight to welcome Barb Lloyd from Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, as well as Luke Fox, a constituent.

I also want to wish everyone a Shanah Tovah. Happy new year; happy Rosh Hashanah.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I was able to have lunch last week with my page, Alessandro De Simone. He is joined today at Queen's Park by his parents, Emilia and Marco De Simone. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour today to introduce the family of page Duncan VanPagee, who is the page captain for today. I get to introduce to the Legislature, from Vineland, Louise and Laurens VanPagee, Nelly and Henry VanPagee, and Linda and Ted Robertson.

I would also like to introduce, from Grimsby, Ontario, Elizabeth Spilotro and Giovanni Spilotro, as well as Dr. Darren Cargill from the OMA.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to extend a special welcome to the 36 local presidents from Ontario colleges across the province who have joined us this morning, including Darryl Bedford from Fanshawe College in London. I would also like to recognize J.P. Hornick from OPSEU's college academic division, who is here today in the members' gallery.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today I would like to welcome a new member of my constituency staff, Brian MacKay. I hope he enjoys his visit to Queen's Park.

Welcome, Brian.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Tina and Emma Catley from the great city of Owen Sound and the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir d'annoncer que David Fasciano, qui est le président du SEFPO pour le Collège Boréal, est ici avec nous.

I would also like to welcome Kim McNab, who is the president for Cambrian with OPSEU, who is here today with us.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Shawn Pentecost, who is a member of the Algonquin College faculty in Pembroke, Ontario, and is here today on OPSEU lobby day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take the opportunity to introduce Mr. Ken Richardson. He is a resident of Guelph, but the reason I am introducing him is because he is the father of Kyle Richardson, who works with me in the government House leader's office. So I want to welcome Mr. Richardson to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to welcome David Kuhn up in the gallery there. He works in the Kitchener constituency office, and it is also his birthday today.

Miss Monique Taylor: I am pleased to welcome some OPSEU folks who are here today from Hamilton. We have Geoff Ondercin-Bourne and Kevin MacKay, and I see Eddy Almeida, who is also a member of my riding. I would like to welcome them all to Queen's Park today.

LYN MCLEOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize former leader of the Ontario Liberal Party Ms. Lyn McLeod for receiving the 2017 Distinguished Service Award, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed. We will consider that a motion. Therefore, I will now turn to the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition for a tribute.

Mr. Patrick Brown: It's an honour to pay tribute to former cabinet minister and Ontario Liberal leader Lyn McLeod. I commend the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians for recognizing someone who has dedicated much of her life to public service.

When I cross the province I meet strong women leaders from across all professions: business, science, education, journalism, medicine and more. They are contributing to the fields they love to work in.

In our profession, as elected representatives, there have been outstanding individuals whose legacies live on. Lyn McLeod is one of those individuals.

It goes without saying that she paved the way as the first female leader of a political party in Ontario. When I speak to my colleagues Jim Wilson and Ted Arnott, who remember her well, they tell me how kind, smart and

compassionate Lyn was in the House. These are all things constituents should expect out of an elected representative.

As we researched this to pay tribute to Lyn, one of the quotes that stuck out to me was Steve Paikin describing Lyn McLeod as "truly one of the nicest people I've ever met in public life." There are a chorus of others who would say the same thing about Lyn.

She was elected to the riding of Fort William in the provincial election of 1987, defeating incumbent Progressive Conservative Michael Hennessy. She represented the riding of Fort William/Thunder Bay-Atikokan until 2003. She held several ministerial roles, including colleges and universities, energy and natural resources and, as party leader, she served as the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition in the 1990s. I would like to recognize her work during this time, in particular because she strove to improve Ontario's social infrastructure.

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When it came to helping families with severely disabled children, Lyn's efforts were tremendous. She recognized the maze of bureaucracy that they had to struggle through and did her best to help simplify the system by demanding the coordination of children's services.

Lyn McLeod also raised concerns about an issue that raises the hair, I think, on all of our necks: keeping dangerous sexual offenders off our streets. She repeatedly brought attention to the matter after the tragedy of Christopher Stephenson in 1988 that shocked the province and led to an inquest. He was an 11-year-old who was murdered by a convicted child molester. Lyn took action to demand legislative changes to keep our streets safe, and her efforts will long be recognized as making a very tangible difference.

If an issue mattered to her, Lyn McLeod was thoughtful and effective in her critiques and her ideas. She worked hard for change.

Since stepping away from politics and from the political discourse, she has remained actively involved in community work, in particular around the issues of education and health care. She has served as the chair of the Ontario Health Quality Council, Ontario representative to the Health Council of Canada, founding chancellor of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and as past chair of the board of governors of Confederation College in Thunder Bay. Earlier this year, she was named chancellor of Lakehead University—and I've certainly seen her work with Lakehead. She is an exceptional force in our post-secondary education system and has played an important role in helping Ontario's students succeed.

For the past four years, I'm proud to say Lyn, in her good judgment, has become a resident of Simcoe county. I've seen Ms. McLeod at Georgian College and in Barrie, and I know she currently resides in Alliston. She currently serves as the vice-chair of the New Path Youth and Family Services board of directors and is on the board of governors of Georgian College.

In 1992, more than 2,000 Liberals came together to elect Lyn McLeod as the new leader of the Ontario Liberal Party. The world has changed a lot over that time, over the past few decades. More and more women are now getting involved in government, getting elected and becoming our leaders. To put into perspective how things have changed, the year that Lyn ran for Premier and saw the Progressive Conservatives win a majority government, they only had 19 MPPs who were women.

It's crucial to recognize Ontario's strong and successful women, like Lyn McLeod, who inspire all of us to do our best as elected representatives in public service, and the role model that Lyn McLeod is. Throughout her career, she has inspired many and broken down barriers. By celebrating the achievements of great women such as Lyn McLeod, we pay tribute to their role in building our province and our country. While we have made enormous steps toward gender equality over the years, there is still a lot of important work that remains undone.

I want to thank Lyn McLeod for leading the way with a strong, influential and respected voice in politics. I have no doubt that she has encouraged and inspired young people to fulfill their dreams and make a difference. For that, all Ontarians should be thankful for her time in public service.

It's wonderful to have an opportunity today to pay tribute to Lyn McLeod.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: As women's issues critic for the Ontario New Democratic Party, I'm honoured to rise, on behalf of my caucus and my leader, Andrea Horwath, to pay tribute to former Liberal leader and MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan Lyn McLeod.

Respected for her work ethic, her curiosity and insatiable appetite for information, her ability to canvass views and weigh different perspectives, Lyn McLeod's dedication to public service began long before she was elected to this place. A lifelong learner who trained as a teacher, raised four daughters and helped put her husband through medical school, Lyn served for 17 years as a trustee on the Lakehead board of education, including seven years as chair. She earned an MA in psychology as a mature student and was working with troubled children and their families at the local hospital when she decided to seek the 1987 provincial nomination in a riding that was then viewed as unwinnable for the Liberals.

In 1992 she permanently cracked a glass ceiling in Ontario politics, becoming the first woman to lead a major political party, the first provincial leader from Thunder Bay, and, as she frequently notes, the shortest Liberal leader ever.

Lyn McLeod's path to political office is typical of so many women in politics. She began her career with the school board and moved to the provincial level once her children had finished school. Throughout her 33 years in elected office, she faced the barriers and the stereotypes and the double standards that continue to confront women in public life. After the disappointment of the

1995 election, McLeod worried that her election loss may have set women back. There is no question, however, that the glass ceiling later shattered by so many Canadian women Premiers started with the crack that Lyn McLeod had made.

Lyn's years on the school board helped her develop the leadership style that became uniquely hers, marked by a preference for problem-solving, consensus-building and compromise as well as a toughness and determination to get things done. "I don't begin with the assumption that I know what we need to do," McLeod said in a media interview. "I begin with a willingness to hear what people say. I believe in listening first and then making your decision."

In 1987, after her upset victory in the long-time Tory stronghold of Fort William, she was immediately tapped for cabinet in the role of Minister of Colleges and Universities. Two years later, she became the envy of all other northern MPPs when she took on the demanding portfolios of both energy and natural resources, breaking more new ground as Canada's first female forestry minister.

She was elected as the 22nd leader of the Ontario Liberal Party in 1992 against an all-male slate of five other contenders, winning a gruelling 12-hour, five-ballot victory in the wee hours of the morning by less than 10 votes. As leader, she focused on healing divisions within a demoralized party and on restoring the party's health. A year after she took over, the party was out of debt and climbing in the polls.

Fondly remembered as Thunder Bay's first lady of politics, Lyn McLeod has also been called "nobody's granny" and, most memorably, "a small, gutsy broad." Media reports of her time in office describe her as "unassuming and soft-spoken," "relentlessly cordial" and "unfailingly polite," a thoughtful and reflective stickler for process, who used her skills to bring people together and move issues forward.

Throughout her 16 years at Queen's Park, Lyn McLeod never forgot the people who sent her there. She was one of the few Liberals to survive both the NDP sweep in 1990 and the Progressive Conservative sweep in 1995. In 1999, she celebrated her fourth and final election victory as MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan and was the first candidate in the province to be projected a winner by the CBC. When she stepped down as leader in November 1996, then-NDP leader Howard Hampton remarked that she was so highly respected as an MPP that members of his own family who lived in her constituency had voted for her.

An editorial in the Thunder Bay Chronicle had this to say about Lyn McLeod after she announced her decision not to run again in the 2003 election: "Always above all are McLeod's roots in her community, beginning with her supportive husband, Neil, and the daughters she adores: Dana, Robin, Dara and Kristen. She believes in the power of politics, not to advance her own career and reward her financial backers, but to make a difference in the lives of people. It's what politicians are supposed to do."

That's the kind of legacy, Speaker, that would make any of us proud.

To Lyn and to the family members who have joined you today, we offer many thanks for your years of selfless service to the people you represented so well in Thunder Bay and across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is truly an honour to be able to stand in my place today to pay tribute to a personal role model, a friend and a woman whose work has made our province a better place in which to live and, in particular, in which to learn.

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C'est un honneur que de reconnaître Lyn McLeod pour tout ce qu'elle a accompli afin de faire de l'Ontario le meilleur endroit pour vivre et apprendre.

Lyn may be shorter than I am, but I will just say that I have invoked her name many times when I have asked for a riser in front of one of the many thousands of podiums in this province and around the world that are built for men. So I just thank you, Lyn, for paving that way.

Later today, as you've heard, Mr. Speaker, Lyn will receive this year's Distinguished Service Award from the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians. I want to thank them for this tribute that they are giving to Lyn McLeod, and I couldn't agree more with their choice. Lyn's contributions to public life are impressive and enduring, and we've heard some of them already.

But I also want to just reinforce something that has already been said: Lyn McLeod is a warm, loving human being. She is beloved because of the way she has treated people throughout her life. That is why it is such a pleasure to be able to speak to her today.

Lyn first entered public service almost 50 years ago, when she became a school trustee for Lakehead Board of Education. She was a former children's counsellor, and she was driven to run by her passion for the education of children with special needs. As a trustee, Lyn fought to make our schools places where every child could reach their full potential. We share that belief that education is where it all starts—the foundation of our democracy, of fairness and of opportunity—and it is the best possible investment in our future.

In 1987, as we've heard, Lyn carried that conviction to Queen's Park when she was elected the member of provincial Parliament for Fort William, later representing Thunder Bay–Atikokan. During her 16 years in the Legislature, she held numerous cabinet positions, leading portfolios in advanced education, energy and natural resources.

I remember coming to Queen's Park as a parent to listen to the Legislature. I was always very interested in what Lyn McLeod had to say about the issues of the day.

I remember, particularly, coming to a committee where the discussion was about the effects of the Education Accountability Act and what the impact on our school system would be. The government of the day was proposing to take resources out of the classroom. I knew

that these changes would harm our students. Lyn was on that committee, and she listened to our concerns. She listened to them, she responded respectfully, and she responded wisely. That was, for me, an introduction to how legislators should treat the public when they come to Queen's Park and when they are participating in democracy. As a parent of four children and as a former trustee, Lyn implicitly understood what this act would do to the quality of education in Ontario, which was a primary concern of hers always. I was always impressed by the depth of her knowledge and of her conviction. I came to admire Lyn very much during that time period.

As the education critic and health critic during Dalton McGuinty's first years leading our party, Lyn brought much-needed attention to important challenges. One area that was close to Lyn's heart over the years was making post-secondary education more accessible. She stood in this chamber many times to talk about the young people whose dreams of college and university were being dashed by tuition costs. I know that she feels as much hope and optimism as I do about the fact that one third of Ontario students are receiving free tuition this year.

One thing in particular that Lyn said while serving in the opposition sticks with me, and it's this: She said, "I like to think of the great dream of public education as having been advanced step by step, rather like taking a giant boulder and pushing it very, very slowly up a mountain." We're still doing that, Mr. Speaker. After leaving politics, Lyn continued to push that giant boulder as the first chancellor of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and as chair of the board of governors at Confederation College in her hometown of Thunder Bay.

I want to say just one more thing, and that is how grateful I am for what Lyn did in 1992. In 1992, Lyn McLeod shattered a glass ceiling in this province: She became the first woman chosen to lead a major political party in Ontario. I don't think it is too much to say that she inspired a new generation of female politicians to put their names on a ballot and make a positive difference in public life. Lyn made it possible for me to stand here today as the first female Premier of Ontario. But to tell you the truth, I've always wished I could have been the second female Premier of Ontario, after her.

So thank you to Lyn McLeod for your unrelenting dedication to make our province a better, fairer place. Thank you for all of the people you have influenced, and thank you for making so much of your life available to the people of this province. And to her family, who didn't live close by when Lyn was involved in this endeavour: Thank you so much for allowing your mom to make such a difference in this province. Thank you so much. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all the members who spoke for their heartfelt and warm comments about my friend Lyn McLeod.

I want to take a moment just to simply say that as a friend, I always turned to Lyn to listen. She listened, and I learned. I want to thank her for that.

I want to thank the parliamentary organization for putting on these tributes.

We'll ensure that all of these fine words that are spoken for you, being in this place right now—so that your family and your future generations will know that we honoured you and thanked you for your contribution to the province of Ontario. Thank you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And as a direct request of Lyn McLeod, there will be no heckling today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I just made a major mistake.

Therefore, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Patrick Brown: The Premier and her cabinet will be meeting with the Quebec cabinet this weekend—and my question is for the Premier. Historically, this has meant that hydro ratepayers in Ontario are about to be on the hook for another secret deal to import power that we do not need. So I have a very direct question, and that is: Will the Premier be signing a contract this weekend? Will she be importing more Quebec power that Ontario does not need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition that, actually, there will be no new contracts signed this week. But I would also say to him that I think it makes eminent sense that Ontario and Quebec would work together.

We are going to be holding our seventh joint cabinet meeting, because central Canada is a very important part of this country: the majority of the population, the majority of the contribution to the GDP. It only makes good sense that Ontario and Quebec would work together, that we would find ways to collaborate on innovation and to work together on agreements that will benefit both provinces on energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: When the Premier says “work together,” I wonder if that’s code for “negotiate.” If Ontario does sign a new deal with Quebec and if it is anything like the deal that we saw in the newspapers this summer, Ontario will be on the hook for more power we do not need.

In fact, Ontario doesn’t need this power, based on what we saw in the newspapers, let alone the eight terawatt hours of hydro power from Quebec that was covered in the papers, which it was suggested was proposed. Just last year, this government wasted 7.6 terawatt hours of clean electricity—most of it clean, green electricity, most of it spilling our hydroelectric power.

I know the Premier has said they’re not going to be signing a deal this weekend. Are there negotiations right now for such a deal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let’s be clear that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about a deal that was rejected. It was not signed.

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We are always looking for ways to work with Quebec, with other provinces, and with states, quite frankly, to find ways to enhance our capacity in this province, as I said, whether that is in innovation, whether that is in energy or, beyond that, whether it’s in education. So we will continue to look for partners. We will find ways to work together, as we have in the past.

As I said, later this week, our two cabinets will be hosting a joint meeting in Quebec City. That is our fourth consecutive annual meeting, but our government has met with the cabinet of Quebec over the last number of years.

I will also be addressing the National Assembly, the first Premier outside of Quebec to do so.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Once again, the Premier says “work together” and doesn’t say there are no negotiations.

In the summer, when we saw this deal, that appears to be scuttled, by the media reports, we heard what stakeholders said about the negotiations and what was proposed. The Society of Energy Professionals said, “I certainly see Quebec’s interests reflected in the deal. Ontario’s interests ... are not so clear.”

The Association of Power Producers of Ontario said, “Ontario already has a surplus of energy, so it’s very difficult to see how this deal or any other sole-source deal with Quebec could benefit the province and its ratepayers.”

Once again, a very specific question, but not about what the Premier is doing in Quebec: Are there negotiations right now for another sole-source deal that benefits Quebec instead of Ontario? Are there any conversations? Are there any negotiations? Ontarians deserve to know.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let’s be clear that what the Leader of the Opposition is asking is, are we, as a government, talking to Quebec, or are officials from Ontario talking to Quebec officials, in the name of finding an agreement that would benefit Ontario, as we have in the past? Previous discussions have led to last year’s agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower costs to Ontario ratepayers by \$70 million.

So if the Leader of the Opposition is asking if officials are engaged in a conversation with Quebec that is ongoing, that could lead to further deals, further agreements, that would be beneficial to Ontario and would reduce costs for Ontario, the answer is yes, Mr. Speaker.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Since I can’t get an answer on the Premier’s job-creating plan for Montreal, I’ll try—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Come to order.

Start the clock.

Question, please?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I hope the Premier got a chance to see the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers' report this summer. They crunched the numbers, and the numbers were shocking. It showed that Ontario wasted \$1 billion worth of clean electricity last year.

Now, I know that a billion dollars is nothing to this government. There are too many billion-dollar scandals to count. But, Mr. Speaker, this is different. That could have powered 760,000 homes.

Mr. Speaker, how does this government justify flushing a billion dollars' worth of clean, green electricity down the drain? And how do they justify this while pursuing contracts for more generation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is that we shouldn't have surplus power ever in the province of Ontario.

We remember the days when that philosophy drove our energy system. We remember the days when there were generators on the front lawns of Queen's Park, because we didn't have enough power to meet demand.

What the Leader of the Opposition either refuses to understand or comprehend, or doesn't understand or comprehend, is that our nuclear units are going to be coming out of service as our nuclear power is going to be regenerated. As that happens, we will need that surplus power.

So we're planning ahead to ensure that we don't do what those guys did and leave this province in a position where we don't have enough power to meet our corporate demand, our industrial demand and the demand for our households for energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier, and I get why she doesn't want to be on the record on this. The Ontario engineers' past president noted that this is a 58% increase in wasted clean, green electricity since 2015, and next year it could be worse. He said that this is occurring "all while the province continues to export more than two million homes' worth of electricity to neighbouring jurisdictions for a price less than it costs to produce."

So let's break this down, Mr. Speaker. The government flushes away more than a billion dollars' worth of power, and then they export millions of homes' worth of power at a loss to the United States and other provinces. At the same time, the people of Ontario struggle to pay their hydro bill.

How does this make any sense? How can they continue to flush power down the drain, while exporting power at a loss? Will the Premier please answer?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've worked very hard to build a clean, reliable and affordable energy system, and the fact that we're taking, on average, 25% off the bills of Ontario residents is something that Ontario residents greet as good news, even if it's bad political news for the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: This leader has absolutely no plan whatsoever. It's been 202 days since the Leader of the Opposition promised to come up with his new plan. A lot has changed in that time. Spring has turned into summer, and now summer is turning into fall. Our kids have finished grade 1 and started another grade. An entire baseball season has already come and gone. Even the NHL playoffs have finished, and now a new season is right around the corner. I could go on.

We're never going to get a plan from the member opposite, because he has no plan. He's a nowhere man with a nowhere plan. We have a plan that's delivering—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, for a third time, my question is for the Premier. The past president of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers added this: He said that the numbers show that "Ontario's cleanest source of power is literally going down the drain"—literally going down the drain, according to Ontario's engineers. That's power that Ontario could have used—and eliminated the need to sign contracts for more imported power.

Will the Premier continue to let Ontario's cleanest source of electricity be poured down the drain? Rather than attack others—I want to know why they've allowed this to happen. Why does the Premier hate Ontario's beautiful, clean, green hydroelectric power?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're the only party in this Legislature that has a long-term energy plan that will provide a clean, reliable, affordable energy system. The member opposite has no plan whatsoever—no plan for clean energy, no plan for a reliable energy system and certainly no plan to reduce energy rates. In fact, he opposed our plan to bring down energy costs by 25%.

To quote the Beatles, Mr. Speaker—I've wanted to do this for a long time:

He's a real nowhere man,
Sitting in his nowhere land,
Making all his nowhere plans for nobody.

Doesn't have a point of view,
Knows not where he's going to.

But we do, Mr. Speaker, and that's to a clean, reliable and affordable energy system for the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. On Thursday, MPPs passed an NDP motion calling

on the government to immediately expand the mandate of the Wettlaufer long-term-care inquiry. That motion demanded that the government take a hard look at the systemic problems in seniors' care in this province.

Will the Premier listen to the Legislature, listen to countless families and move today to immediately expand the public inquiry to look into the crisis in seniors' care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to comment on the details, but let me be clear: As I read the terms of reference for the review of the case, my understanding is that there is plenty of scope in those terms of reference to actually allow for an investigation if there is a systemic issue that arises in the process of looking at this one case.

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I was very clear, as we went into this process, about asking that question because I think if there are systemic issues that are raised, I completely agree with the leader of the third party that those systemic issues need to be explored. But all of that is within the context of the terms of reference that begin with this particular case.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's a pretty sad day when the Premier of the province doesn't realize that her public inquiry is tied to the Wettlaufer murders or other similar situations—that's what her inquiry does. That's why everybody in this House, including some of her own cabinet ministers, decided to support our motion—because everybody realizes we have a growing horrific crisis in long-term care. We need to be honest about that and address it. The best way to do that is to ask the hard questions and come up with recommendations that will happen through a proper-scoped public inquiry.

My question is back to the Premier: Why does her Liberal government and why does her Minister of Health refuse to acknowledge what everybody in this House acknowledged last week, and that is that we need a broader-scoped public inquiry to get to the problems in our long-term-care system?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, this is an issue of great import to the province and particularly to the families, friends and loved ones of those who are now deceased as a result of the murders that took place in Woodstock and in London and the assaults that took place as well. Our hearts go out to those individuals. That is the primary focus why, in response to Ontarians and many stakeholders asking us to launch a public inquiry, we did precisely that.

I'm very confident that Justice Gillese will do the proper analysis, make the correct determinations, consult widely, broadly and publicly and arrive at a set of recommendations so that we, hopefully, can prevent this

type of tragic situation ever occurring again. And that includes, if necessary, looking at issues—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Seniors' care is at a breaking point in this province. The front-line staff are doing the best they can, but people are left in bed for 18 hours without even having any personal contact from a worker in the facility. There are people who are missing meals in long-term care. There are 30,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care.

This House said that a public inquiry should take a hard look at the levels of staffing, for example, and funding in long-term care. It should ask about the government's inaction after many years now on countless recommendations that have come forward—but nothing has been done to fix the system. It needs to look really honestly at the systemic problems that we have in long-term care, problems that—so many families are up at night worried sick about their loved ones in long-term care.

Will this Premier do the right thing? Will she do the right thing and expand the public inquiry today, or will we have yet another excuse and another Premier sweeping all of this under the carpet?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We owe it to Ontarians to get to the answers that they're asking for. We intentionally drafted the terms of reference for the Gillese inquiry to be very broad precisely for that reason, including the potential to look at systemic issues of oversight and accountability throughout the long-term-care system. She can look at—it's in the terms—other relevant matters that the commissioner considers necessary to avoid similar tragedies.

These are tragedies of safety and security and the well-being of people in our long-term care.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Thank you.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I trust Justice Gillese to get to the answer, to have a broad inquiry and to answer the questions that Ontarians are asking rightly for.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. On Thursday, this Legislature also passed the NDP's bill, through second reading, to set up a dedicated ministry for mental health and addictions. I believe it's time to bring mental health care and addictions services out of the shadows and give them the funding, resources and attention that they deserve, but somehow this Liberal government voted against this crucial bill.

Why is the Premier refusing to take this important step forward to help people who are suffering and desperately

need better mental health and addictions care here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party, and I also appreciate the idea of setting up a separate ministry.

Mr. Speaker, what we know is needed, for all the reasons that the leader of the third party identified—this is an area of health that has lived in the dark corners of our society. There has not been enough light shone on it, and there have not been the resources that are needed to allow people to get the supports that they require.

What we are doing is we're working to put those resources in place. We're actually increasing the funding to mental health services and doing the work that needs to be done. If at some point there needs to be a conversation about a change in the way those funds are administered or the way the ministries are organized, I'm open to that. But the reality is, we need to get money into the hands of people on the ground who are delivering those services, and that's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mental health and addictions care has been an afterthought for this government for far too long, and it's about time we changed that. People in crisis should never have to wait for the care that they need, and this government knows that people are waiting far too long for the care that they need. Children shouldn't be stuck on waiting lists for help for a year and a half. Young people should never have to suffer the pain of losing a parent, let alone both parents, to mental health and addictions issues. But for seven years, this government has sat on its hands and failed to transform mental health and addictions care so that it's actually there for people when they need it.

Why won't the Premier do the right thing: dedicate a ministry to fixing the problem and deliver the help that people need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If I believed that changing the name of a ministry would solve the problem of mental health in this province that has been with us for decades, I would do it in a minute. But that's not the case.

It is also not the case that we have not addressed this challenge. The fact is that we have a societal issue. When I sit with Premiers from across the country, every single one of them is dealing with these challenges. That's the reason that when the federal government put in place the new health agreement—with which I was not particularly happy, because it did not meet the needs of any of the provinces, but there was a component of mental health dollars that would flow to the province, and there was a recognition that this is a challenge across the country.

So the fact that in February we announced additional immediate investments of \$140 million over three years and that we have put an additional \$100 million into treatment for youth and children—we continue to make investments and to change the system so that people can find their way through it and get the services they need.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know what is the case, Speaker? What is the case is that this Liberal government has had seven years to implement the recommendations from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and they still haven't done it. Seven years later, those recommendations sit gathering dust.

Today, 12,000 children are waiting for care in this province. Young people are waiting up to 18 months to get mental health services. We're in the midst of an emergency of opioid overdose deaths, even though the Premier refuses to call it what it is. After so many years, Ontario still does not have a functioning mental health and addictions system in our province, leaving people in crisis to fall through the enormous cracks that exist.

If seven years wasn't long enough, how much longer does this Premier think people should have to wait for the resources and attention that mental health and addictions absolutely need today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's just not true—we have been investing. We have more than doubled our budget in mental health since coming into office. That party voted against \$140 million of new investments this year alone—including being the first province in the country to fund cognitive behavioural therapy.

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It's important that the public and Legislature know that the select committee did not recommend setting up a separate ministry of mental health and addictions. It's easy to lift an idea from the NDP in British Columbia, who made the announcement a couple of weeks ago. But the select committee did not make that recommendation, nor did my advisory council on mental health and addictions, chaired by Susan Pigott, nor has any stakeholder suggested to me that creating a stand-alone ministry of mental health and addictions would be a positive thing to better integrating mental health and making sure we reduce and eliminate the stigma—and integrate it into the system.

There can be no health without mental health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Health. In 2012, the Liberal government announced an urgently needed electrophysiology lab for cardiac care at St. Mary's hospital in Kitchener. After failing to deliver, the minister bowed to pressure and returned to St. Mary's to recommit and reannounce the lab last year.

Minister, it's fall 2017. Will you tell us where that vital lab is today?

Interjection: Good question.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, it is a good question, and I appreciate it, Mr. Speaker, from the member opposite.

Last year, as the member alluded to, I was in Kitchener for a tremendous announcement at St. Mary's hospital: a \$7-million commitment to their cath lab at the hospital. I know the member opposite saw just how great an announcement it was because he was present for the announcement and as we did the tour of the hospital, and I appreciated that.

At that point a year ago, the program was approved and the money was sent to St. Mary's hospital. Since that time a year ago, St. Mary's has come back to the LHIN and come back to the province and the ministry asking to further expand that program beyond the \$7 million. In fact, it would cost an additional \$2 million in capital and unknown-as-of-yet operational costs. Now the hospital and the LHIN, appropriately, together with the ministry, are working on that request for the expansion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, the minister had to be shamed, literally shamed in this House, to force him down to Kitchener for a reannouncement of this vital lab in 2016. Now we're here again and he has still failed to deliver.

Last week CTV reported the wait that Cassandra Heasman was forced to endure over the past year to be tested and treated before being sent to London for this cardiac procedure. To this day, St. Mary's remains the only one of 11 cardiac hospitals in Ontario still waiting for this vital lab, meaning Cassandra is one of hundreds forced to wait. Yet the only answers we receive to our questions are disappointing political distractions, of course, from the local government member, that should have no part in this discussion.

This is a dangerous waiting game with our health care priorities. No politics and no more empty promises—will the minister finally deliver the cardiac lab at St. Mary's that patients in Kitchener-Waterloo and surrounding areas require?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The fact is, the money was approved and the money was sent and the program exists and the program is growing as it should be. What they're talking about and what we're very interested in is the request for a further expansion.

We approved the project in 2012, but it's a phased program. You can't just leap right forward to the full cardiac program.

In 2013, they launched their implantable cardioverter defibrillator program—an additional \$2 million in funding then. With these investments, it allowed them to mature, as they asked for, to be able to develop and implement and provide the full program that was announced a year ago. Seven million dollars in funding was provided. They've come back with an additional request to expand that as a new phase. The LHIN and the hospital and the ministry are looking at it. I think all Ontarians, except that one, would agree that's an appropriate process.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Last week the Premier of Ontario took the witness stand in the Sudbury bribery case. She seemed to have trouble with her memory, forgetting quite a few details about the interactions between herself and her team, and the time that her party was courting the Minister of Energy to run for them. For example, the Premier couldn't remember if she ever talked to the minister about paid jobs for his staffers. That's a pretty important piece of information. Is the Premier's memory any better now that she's had time to think about it?

Speaker, the question is clear—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

I'm listening very carefully to this type of question in the House, and it has to have relevance to the government. I'm hoping that the member will be able to, throughout her preamble, pull it back to government policy.

I'm going to give you an—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

I want to give the member an opportunity to relate it to government policy. Please feel free to try.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

This would go back to the Premier's accountability and transparency in the province.

I would like to know if she or her staffers had an exchange with the minister for his staff—to agree to run for her party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Again, I made reference to this last week—I think it was last week, or the week before—with relevance to government policy. Inside of this court case, there needs to be relevance to the government policy that's happening. Right now, that question has not come to that level and standard.

If the member cannot rephrase the question to make it government policy, I'm going to ask her to either re-submit a different question or I'll pass.

One last time.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to know if the Premier has a policy within her transparency and accountability—about her accountability, and whether she offered jobs to people in the reduction of people running for her party. It's about accountability and transparency. The people of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to make it clear that the member is not complying with what I've asked in terms of policy. You're talking about a political party's process, not government policy. I will offer you an opportunity in your supplementary to start again, and if that does not comply, I'm going to pass the question.

The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: The Premier of this province has claimed time and time again that her government is accountable and transparent. When she was on the stand

in Sudbury, she had a different reflection of what had transpired during her interactions with the now-Minister of Energy.

Does the Premier still agree that she didn't have any recollections, or did she have recollections of her conversations with the Minister of Energy? It comes down to accountability, Premier. Which is it?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That does not, in my interpretation, comply with the standard I've asked you to hit.

New question.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me see if I can make this relevant, Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Labour.

Minister, over the years, many constituents in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West have either worked in the nearby General Electric manufacturing plant or know someone close to them who has. I've been following the progress of their health cases very closely. This has been, and continues to be, a very difficult situation for these workers and their families.

Minister, I know you have met with advocates of the workers and the workers themselves many times this year and we are making some progress. In the spring, you held a three-day information clinic in Peterborough to provide workers and family members information and assistance with their claims. You also established a data working group.

Speaker, to the minister: What can you tell us about the consideration of their cases at the WSIB?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise today to answer this question from the member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

I want to thank my colleague to the right of me, the member from Peterborough, the Minister of Agriculture, because it's just an incredible day for the GE workers in Peterborough. They've been through such a tough situation for so long. The situation has dragged on, for people who were exposed to toxins in the past at the GE plant. I'm so happy today to rise to speak to the incredible progress we've made by working together on this.

1130

This week, the WSIB announced that they have established a dedicated review team that's going to reopen and review more than 250 cases involving these GE Peterborough workers. These cases should have had better examination in the past. They're going to get the proper examination they should get today.

Ensuring rapid actions and solutions is what we've been about on this. This is a good day for Peterborough.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. I'm happy to hear of where we are today. As I said before, this has been a very difficult and lengthy process for these workers. I believe they deserve the justice they have sought after for such a long time.

I think it's also important that our government is working to prevent this situation from happening again. I have heard you say many times in this House that you work hard every day to ensure Ontario is among the safest places in the world to work. I know you work hard to ensure that people who go to work come home safe and sound at the end of the day. An important part of that is also ensuring that people don't get sick later in life as a result of their work.

Minister, what are you and your ministry doing to address occupational diseases around the province?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again to the member for that question.

Employers, employees, organized labour, health and safety organizations and this government—my ministry inspectors—work very hard each and every day to ensure that Ontario has become one of the safest places in the world to work, and remains one of the safest places in the world to work.

At the Ministry of Labour, we know it's critical that occupational diseases are treated with exactly the same seriousness and importance as physical injuries. We're focused on prevention.

The cornerstone of what we've been able to learn from this, what we've been able to learn from the GE situation, is that we need a dedicated occupational disease response team. That's what we're putting in place in the province of Ontario. It's going to examine and respond to all aspects of occupational disease exposure. It's going to go from initial reports to enforcement to helping the workers work their way through the claims system. It's a huge step forward for safety in the province of Ontario.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure.

According to public accounts documents, your government failed to spend nearly \$3.3 billion in infrastructure spending during the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Ontarians are waiting for essential infrastructure for their communities, from hospitals to highways. Will the minister provide a list of the projects that are now delayed or not started because 20% of the money he promised to communities was not distributed?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm surprised by the question, Mr. Speaker, given the extent of infrastructure investments we are making as a government. The member would know that we have a project to move forward over 13 years with \$190 billion of infrastructure. Most of that is getting out extremely quickly. We don't take any back seat with respect to our investments in infrastructure. It's been very, very well received across the province.

We also know that there is a tremendous amount that's coming on track immediately, Mr. Speaker. That's coming on track, in fact, in many of the ridings that the Progressive Conservatives hold. I'll address that in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The facts show that 20% was not distributed. According to public accounts documents, this shortfall was due to “lower-than-forecast construction activity for the period.”

Can the minister tell Ontarians why he failed to get these projects going? Was it red tape? Was it inaction? Or is this another stretch goal?

Ontarians expect their government to deliver on their promises, but time and time again, you don’t get the job done—all-day, two-way GO to Kitchener, developing the Ring of Fire, and GO service to Niagara just to name a few.

With so many of your commitments and our communities waiting for action, will the minister table a list of infrastructure projects not started in 2016-17?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have the largest investment in infrastructure in the history of the province of Ontario. Yes, there were some delays because of the processing with the federal government. Some of them have been allocated to all of your ridings. For example, if you look at Sarnia–Lambton, \$8.43 million is allocated, on track and moving forward. If you look, for example, at Leeds–Grenville: \$3,269,000 on the clean water program. If you want to look at Kitchener–Conestoga: \$10,673,000 for clean water and waste. We can go on for every member and every riding and indicate that.

Yes, some of those municipalities have not been able to deliver the actual shovel in the ground on time, but they’re coming, they’re announced—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —they’re allocated, and it’s the largest—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. When I stand, you sit.

New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. It has been five years since the government passed Toby’s Law, granting trans people protections under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Yet there is no equality for trans folk when it comes to accessing health care. My constituent Luke Fox, who is here today, has suffered just trying to get basic follow-up care after surgery. The lack of care has left him absolutely housebound.

Why is the government denying Luke access to follow-up care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to speak to this, but on this day in particular I want to acknowledge the work of the member for Parkdale–High Park on this issue and on so many social issues. She has always been a champion. I know that the announcement that she made today, that she is going to continue to work in the community after the next election—she will continue to work in the community on these issues in particular.

It is absolutely our intention that everyone in this province be treated equitably, that they get the support that they need. As I say, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will speak to the specifics of this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The problem is that Luke is not the only one. He’s one of many who have been unable to access health care. The government is not even planning on offering many of the surgery options that trans folk need. In Ontario, there are now thousands on wait-lists, often under dire circumstances, waiting for necessary care—care that is, five years later, still only available outside the province.

When exactly will equality in health care be offered to our trans community?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I, too, appreciate the advocacy. In fact, this was an issue that the member opposite raised with me last week, and I’ve subsequently followed up with a meeting with my ministry because it is an issue that I’m concerned about as well—individuals who go out of province or out of country to follow up and complete the gender-affirming surgery. When they come back, they may have complications or they may have questions or the need for further health care. It’s a critically important issue, and I’ve asked the ministry to begin that process with our stakeholders, with individuals that can provide us with the best advice on what a suitable path forward might be.

That being said, I know there is much more work to be done, but I am proud of the work that we did that was announced or became effective last year, in the spring, where we changed the system whereby an individual could get approval for sex reassignment surgery—so that, going from one location, we now have literally hundreds of individuals in locations across the province where that process can be sensitively done.

HUMAN RIGHTS

DROITS DE LA PERSONNE

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour le procureur général.

In recent months, there is harassment and intimidation outside of the Morgentaler Clinic in my hometown of Ottawa. Women and health care providers cannot safely enter or exit the clinic, and we know that that is not only happening in Ottawa; there have been complaints of harassment in the GTA and Peel region, among others. It is important to protect women’s right to health care and women’s right to choose what happens to their body.

Mr. Speaker, can the Attorney General please tell us what is the government’s plan to protect these rights of women?

1140

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Vanier for asking a very important question.

Speaker, our government does not tolerate any form of harassment against women exercising their fundamental right to choose.

It is also my steadfast belief, and that of our government, that every woman in Ontario has the right to make decisions about her own health care, and they deserve to do so freely, without fear: without fear for safety, privacy, or dignity; without fear of being judged or publicly humiliated because of their choice; without fear of being threatened with any violence, harassment, or intimidation. It is a woman's right to access health care services, be it abortion services or reproductive health services, without such fear.

Our government, as I have announced earlier, will bring in necessary legislation to protect women's safe access to abortion services in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'd like to thank the Attorney General for his answer and his attention to this problem.

I have a further inquiry because I'd like to have more details about the legislation.

C'est certainement un pas dans la bonne direction. Cependant, I'd like to know how this will balance with the right of free speech. The protection of freedom of expression is important in Ontario as well. I, as the former counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, am very concerned about that.

Can the minister inform us how the bill will reconcile the right of women to access health care and the freedom of expression of anti-abortion protestors?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I could not get this question from a better expert than the member from Ottawa-Vanier, she being an expert in civil liberties and issues around constitutionality and human rights. I very much appreciate this question from the member, who taught at law school and has practised in this area.

Over the summer, we have been doing extensive analysis to answer this very exact question. We have consulted with legal and health experts and pro-choice and anti-choice advocates. It was important for us to hear the voices on all sides of this issue, Speaker.

We have also looked to British Columbia, Quebec and Newfoundland, which have all implemented similar laws in their provinces over the past few decades.

We also have looked at the courts. Certain abortion clinics in Ontario have had injunctions limiting protests around them for years, providing us with the necessary templates to balance competing rights, not to mention the decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada.

At the end of the day, Speaker, we know that not everyone will agree, but I believe that policies like this are important, now more than ever. We need to make sure that we protect women's right to safe access to abortion services.

Premier, over the last 10 months, there have been 1,300 layoffs announced in my riding at three different major factories, including Siemens in Tillsonburg. What does the Premier have to say to all those people who say that they have lost their jobs because of your government's policies?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's a foolish conclusion to come to when you look at what our policy has done to drive this economy forward.

But let me first reach out and say something about those workers—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you calling the people foolish? It's the people who said that, not Mr. Hardeman.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order. And a couple of others are close.

Carry on.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me say a few words about those workers who are impacted by layoffs from time to time, such as the workers at Siemens. It's very unfortunate. That was a plant that was very valuable to that community. The plant came about because of the policies of this government, the clean energy policies that made that plant happen and provided those very good jobs for a number of years.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the types of turbines that were being built there are no longer utilized, and the market for those turbines had dried up. It's unfortunate.

We will continue to work with those workers. Our hearts go out to them, and we'll continue to do everything we can to help them relocate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Back to the Premier: With all due respect to the minister, the people who have lost their jobs want to hear from the Premier on this issue.

The election is nine months away, and I don't want to see any more layoffs in Oxford during that time. But our businesses say that with your government's policies, their choices are layoffs or to close their doors. Yet your government continues to drive jobs out of Oxford and Ontario by increasing the cost of doing business and making it harder for our companies to compete.

Premier, 1,300 jobs lost in Oxford alone should make it clear: Your policies are not working. Will you commit to change your approach and stop piling new costs and regulations on our businesses to save the jobs that we have left?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said, our heart always goes out to workers who find themselves caught in the transition. From time to time, plants do close, and that's part of the transition in our economy.

But the fact of the matter is there has not been a government in this country—and very few governments around the world have an economy performing at the level ours is. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 16 years. Our policies have helped work with our business community to create 760,000 net new jobs, 96% of

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier.

which are full-time. We're leading the G7 in growth. This economy is going well. For the member to suggest otherwise is absolutely doing a disservice to the hard-working business people in this province who are helping to drive this economy ahead.

We're going to continue to make those investments to ensure our economy can continue to grow.

COLLEGES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Since the Liberals took office, Ontario's 24 public colleges have seen an alarming rise in precarious work, to the point that 81% of teaching is now done by contract faculty with substandard wages, no access to benefits and no job security. This means that many of Ontario's 500,000 college students are being educated by professionals who are struggling to make ends meet, who are demoralized and stressed out, and who are forced to reapply every four months for the job they have been doing for years.

There is a direct connection between the quality of education for students and the quality of work for faculty.

Will the Premier commit today to improving job security for contract faculty in Ontario's 24 colleges?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from London West for that question, and I want to say welcome to all of the OPSEU representatives who are here from our college sector today.

This year we're celebrating 50 years of the college system in Ontario, and I tell you it has been 50 extraordinary years. It is impossible to imagine this province without colleges. I just want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the people who make our colleges great, and that is the faculty in them.

I do know that the issue of precarious employment in our colleges is a very real and live issue. I know that we are in bargaining, so I will leave the bargaining to the bargaining table. But I do want to say that we recognize this issue, and the Minister of Labour has introduced Bill 148, which actually starts to address this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Premier: New Democrats have long supported equal pay for equal work, which is why we pushed for strengthened language in Bill 148, language the Liberals voted against. We heard during committee hearings that Bill 148 provides too much latitude for employers to avoid their equal pay obligations. Given years of Liberal underfunding of the college system, colleges will have an incentive to use the loophole and not move forward with equal pay.

What will the Premier do to hold Ontario's colleges to their equal pay obligations for contract faculty and to ensure that the resources are there to support implementation of equal pay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that question. There are two approaches to that answer, obviously.

If we look at the province of Ontario over the years, the track record we have in reaching collective bargaining agreements without strikes or lockouts, I think, is exemplary. It's about 98% or 99%. I'm convinced that that attitude will continue throughout these negotiations as well. That's something we're always confident about: that when we work together, we're able to achieve those types of agreements. We have a history of stability.

Obviously, Bill 148 introduces another angle to this. We've gone out and consulted broadly on this issue. We took it out after first reading. The committee had, I think, a long time to hear a variety of views on this. We continue to work on it. We continue to debate it in the House. It's a work in progress, but the intent is to inject more fairness into the system.

1150

POVERTY REDUCTION

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question is for the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Our government, under the stewardship of our Premier, has always taken a leadership role in exploring bold ways to create fairness and opportunity for the people of Ontario. That's what our fair workplaces plan is about. That's what our fair hydro plan is about. That's why anyone 24 years old or younger will be able to get their prescription medications for free. That's why we launched the basic income pilot—in order to test how we can help people living on low incomes better meet their basic needs while improving their health, education and employment outcomes.

Speaker, this week is International Basic Income Week, I want to ask, through you to the minister, if he could tell members of this House more about Ontario's basic income pilot.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for the question and for his tremendous advocacy on this issue for many years.

While Ontario's economy is growing and it's strong, many people just aren't feeling that growth in their everyday lives. The three-year basic income pilot will study whether a basic income can better support vulnerable workers and give people living on low incomes the security and opportunity to achieve their potential. What we learn from this pilot will help inform our longer-term plans for income security reform.

The pilot was launched this spring in Hamilton, Brantford, Brant county and Thunder Bay and, later this fall, we'll be launching the next phase in Lindsay. In addition, a basic income pilot for First Nations is being co-created with our First Nations partners.

Throughout the summer, we've been holding community information sessions. We're building awareness—and I know the Minister of Community and Social Services will elaborate further in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thank you, Speaker, and to the minister for his answer.

Our government recognizes that some Ontarians are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living. We are working hard to improve the lives of all Ontarians, including, and especially, our most vulnerable. As we enter International Basic Income Week, a week where activists around the world are combining their efforts to advocate for a basic income, it's important to highlight our government leadership in launching a basic income pilot project—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I let the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek get away with a lot by heckle, but now I'm going to ask him to refrain.

Carry on.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: And he's a good man. I'm sure he'll do that.

It's important to highlight our government leadership in launching a basic income pilot in Ontario as a way to see if there is a better way to help people get ahead and stay there. The pilot is an important example of how our government is applying evidence-based policy to promote fairness in the economy.

Will the minister tell us more about the pilot—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for his question. I'm very pleased to share with you on International Basic Income Week details of our evaluation process.

Our ultimate goal is to better understand whether a basic income could provide more opportunity to people living on low incomes and whether it could potentially improve their overall health and educational attainment. Our pilot was designed to ensure that findings from the evaluation are of the highest validity and integrity.

To assist with the evaluation, the government has appointed Dr. Kwame McKenzie as special adviser for the pilot's research and evaluation advisory committee. He is an expert in the field, and his role as special adviser will be to provide advice on how to best evaluate the outcomes of the pilot. I'm sure that his expertise will be invaluable as we move forward on this important project.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Earlier this year, the residents of Niagara West–Glanbrook found out that Revera long-term care is planning to move 50 beds out of the Kilean Lodge in Grimsby, down the QEW to Hamilton. Adrian Peters, a retired engineer living in Caistor Centre, visits his wife at Kilean Lodge every day. Adrian chose Kilean precisely because of its location. He will no longer be able to see his wife every day if she is moved to Hamilton.

What action will the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take to ensure that people like Adrian in Niagara will be able to see their loved ones in care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I'm proud to say that, since coming into office, we have built 10,000 new long-term-care spots. As well, we've redeveloped 13,000, and we're well on our way to our commitment by 2025 to redeveloping 30,000 long-term-care beds in this province.

As it pertains to this specific proposal—and that's all it is at this point; it is a proposal from Revera that has come forward to the government. Part of the approval process—and there's no guarantee of approval, by the way—that we require is a robust community consultation. That, I believe, is what the member opposite is referencing in part: that there is now a public consultation being taken, so we can legitimately and, importantly, get feedback from the very communities and the very families that may be positively or negatively impacted, as we continue our deliberations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Back to the minister: The reality is that this Liberal government has failed to make the substantial and meaningful investments in long-term care that are needed for Ontario. This government is failing families not only in Niagara West–Glanbrook but families like those of Adrian's all across Ontario.

Speaker, after 14 years of Liberal mismanagement, my constituents are rightly concerned that long-term-care capacity could be removed from the Niagara region. Beds are being taken away, with no plan to replace them. This is unacceptable.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Can families like Adrian's count on more long-term-care beds in Niagara, or will they be disappointed once again by this tired Liberal government?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course we're committed to continuing to invest in long-term care. In fact, in the most recent budget, which that member and that party voted against, we increased that long-term-care budget by an additional \$80 million. Actually, that was a 2% increase. It was \$80 million this year alone. Part of that was for behavioural supports, which is to accommodate those seniors, those individuals, in long-term care who have more complex needs, including dementia, for example.

I want to reassure the member and the community he represents that we have a very robust process where a requirement of any proponent—whether it's creating new beds or shifting or moving beds—is that they engage the community, engage those people most affected, and we then receive that through the LHIN. With the LHIN's involvement, we receive that as part of our determination as to whether we should consider this proposal or not.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Premier: Residents in Kenora–Rainy River were shocked last month when they learned that the long-delayed twinning of Highway 17

has been delayed yet again. Instead of being completed by 2020, the completion date is now 2021 and beyond, meaning that we really have no idea when this crucial project will be finished. Even more shocking is that instead of accepting responsibility for the delay, the Minister of Northern Development blamed Shoal Lake 39 First Nation.

Is this the type of reconciliation we can expect from this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for the question. This is an issue that, over my three years and a little bit as Minister of Transportation, I've had the opportunity to work hard on with respect to talking to the communities in the affected areas. I've not only heard from members from northern Ontario on our side of the Legislature; I've also had the chance to speak with our federal colleague Bob Nault, from that particular community, and I've heard from mayors along the way.

What I can confirm is that right across the north, there is a great deal of excitement about the fact that our government is so committed to investing hundreds of millions of dollars in expanding highways in every corner of the north, Speaker. In fact, we see in our northern highways program more monies dedicated to the expansion of highways than probably at any other time in Ontario history.

I also know that not that long ago, the Premier herself was in the Kenora area and had the chance to meet with both Shoal Lake 39 and Shoal Lake 40.

I can confirm in this Legislature that the Ministry of Transportation will continue to work very closely with all of our partners, including our First Nations, to make sure that we—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: The public accounts recently revealed that this government failed to spend \$3.3 billion in budgeted infrastructure cash last year. In fact, the Premier has spent nearly \$4 billion less on infrastructure during her first four years than the previous Premier spent during his last four years.

This Premier keeps playing political games with her infrastructure projects and promises, especially in the north. She'll drop by to make big announcements, but when it's time for action, she disappears. This is why crucial projects like the twinning of Highway 17 keep getting delayed.

When will this Premier stop blaming First Nations for her own lack of action on this infrastructure file?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, I'm a little bit astounded by that question.

In 2017-18, this Premier and our government are investing a historic \$630 million to expand and repair highways in northern Ontario.

In my entire time as Minister of Transportation, I have witnessed year in and year out members of the NDP

caucus do their best to try and impede progress when it comes to critical transportation infrastructure.

Whether we're talking about the GTHA or we're talking about the northwest of Ontario, Premier Kathleen Wynne and our government will continue to make the right investments in the right place at the right times, and we'll do it partnering with our First Nations to make sure we produce the best possible outcome for them and for the entire people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the members' gallery we have with us the member for Scarborough—Agincourt in the 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments: Mr. Gerry Phillips. We're glad you're with us, Gerry. Welcome.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very honoured today to welcome some very important guests in this chamber, starting with Jean Yip, widow of MP Arnold Chan; his three sons, Nathaniel, Ethan and Theodore; and many Scarborough—Agincourt residents who are here: starting with the honourable Gerry Phillips; his beautiful wife, Kay; Sandy Kaskens, the principal of Dr. Norman Bethune; Hilla Master; Anne Hu, also a resident of Scarborough—Agincourt; Pat and Bjoy Das; and the one and only Thomas Chong, who is the former president of Professional Engineers Ontario.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BILL IVES

Mr. Jim Wilson: Today I rise to recognize a very special constituent in Simcoe—Grey, Dr. Bill Ives, who turned 90 earlier this year. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate him on this important milestone and to thank him for his contribution to our community.

I have known Dr. Ives for many, many years. He is an amazing person and a dedicated member of the community. He lives in the great town of Stayner in Clearview township. He was raised in Stayner and attended public school there. He went to the University of Toronto for medical school, following in the footsteps of his father, Dr. R.E. Ives.

Dr. Ives had a medical practice in Stayner with an office on Main Street. He started his career when patients still paid doctors in cash or trade. He often bartered chickens, baked goods and other items for his services before medicare came into effect. Dr. Ives was instrumental in getting the Stayner Medical Centre built, and it

remains a tremendously important service in the community today.

For many years, Dr. Ives travelled to Ecuador to provide his services to people in need. His commitment to those less fortunate than us in Canada was amazing. I'm proud to call Dr. Ives a friend. He is the epitome of the saying, "Once a doctor, always a doctor." He continued to provide medical service to patients well after the age most of us would have retired. For many years, Dr. Ives was involved with Clearview Community Theatre, acting on stage and helping behind the scenes with many productions.

His commitment to our community and his patients is a great example to all of us. Thank you, Dr. Bill Ives.

MEMBER FOR
PARKDALE-HIGH PARK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Today is both a sad and glad day for me—sad because I formally announced that I will not run again in the election of 2018. I wish to thank the people of Parkdale-High Park for re-electing me four times and all the members of this assembly who have worked along with me to accomplish what we have managed to accomplish out of my office in the last 11 years. We've passed more private members' bills than anybody in Ontario's history, and more LGBTQ legislation than anyone in Canada's history.

I would not have been successful without the assistance of members of all of our political parties. Working across partisan lines is the way forward. When we keep in mind the best results for the most Ontarians, we keep the spirit of parliamentary democracy alive. I will miss all of you.

I'm also excited. I am in fact returning to my true love: theology, advocacy and ministry. I have been doing consulting work for the National Democratic Institute out of Washington where LGBTQ and women's rights are concerns internationally and will continue that work, but I'm not leaving Toronto. In fact, I'm moving only a mile or two away to become minister at Trinity-St. Paul's United Church and Centre for Faith, Justice and the Arts on Bloor Street by Spadina, starting January 1, 2018.

Trinity-St. Paul's is and will be a centre for all non-binary, queer, lesbian, bisexual, trans and gay people—folk like me. It will be a centre for queer theology and spirituality for all those fleeing oppression based on race, class, immigration status and poverty as well. I'm thrilled; it's a place—one of the few—where women's leadership is extolled and encouraged.

Queen's Park will be a part of my parish, and I intend to continue fighting for those who are marginalized, but also providing pastoral care for those who are in need in the political sphere, both here and in Ottawa. Political work is non-stop, exhausting and demanding. I intend to be here, and there, for anyone who needs someone who can listen and someone who can pray.

There's much work to do: climate change, LGBTQ and human rights, interfaith work, animal protection,

economic justice, housing, workplace fairness, union support and women's rights. I promise to be very present for all of it.

My radio show on CIUT 89.5 FM will continue under its original name, the Radical Reverend, at its same time. I'm also delivering a TED Talk on October 27 on queer Christianity. And of course, you'll be able to hear me any Sunday at Trinity-St. Paul's at 10:30 a.m., which will also be aired. I invite you all. No matter what you've done, no matter what you believe or don't believe, no matter who you love, no matter who you are, you will be welcomed there.

God gifted me with a voice. I will continue to use it. Thank you all for your love and support.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for her statement. We shall miss you.

Further members' statements?

ARNOLD CHAN

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise this afternoon to remember, celebrate and honour my dear friend the honourable Arnold Chan. I would like to thank Arnold's parents, Anthony and Sandra, his brother, Dr. Kevin Chan, his wife, Jean, and their three beautiful young sons, Nathaniel, Ethan and Theodore for sharing him with all of us.

Arnold grew up in Agincourt. He lived, breathed, promoted and practised Liberalism throughout his youth and until his untimely death on September 14. For almost 40 years, Arnold had been an advocate for the lives of Canadians. His dream was always to serve. His aspirations began in his high school years with young Liberals in George and Sylvia Pusey's basement.

He epitomized everything that is good about public service. Arnold was a strong defender of democracy and built his life's values on devotion, dedication and duty as a public servant. He was devoted to his family, democracy, civility and humanity. Even while undergoing treatments and in his exhaustion, Arnold was dedicated to his constituents. He would return calls, attend functions and meet with them to offer his support.

Mr. Speaker, I last saw Arnold on August 27. We spent most of our time talking about Bridletowne Hub that he championed for since elected in 2014. These described the measure of the man and the commitment to the constituents. He knew his time was short, but he was not afraid to speak out. He always meant what he said. Canadians heard Arnold's eloquent remarks in the House of Commons on June 12. Arnold reminded us that our civic duty includes not just casting a ballot, but "taking care, in our everyday actions, of the country we are lucky to call home." He encouraged all parliamentarians to start "ditching the canned talking points," to "elevate our debates" and "listen to each other."

Mr. Speaker, Arnold's imparting words reflect a great Canadian's legacy. Our lives are enriched by his contributions to both provincial and federal governments.

Arnold Chan: a proud son, a proud brother, a proud husband, a proud father, a proud friend and, most importantly, a proud statesman. Thank you for your strength, your courage and your love, and thank you, Arnold, for your lifelong commitment to public service.

Applause.

1510

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for her statement and also the family and friends for being here. It was a very nice tribute. I appreciate it very much.

Further members' statements?

REFUGEES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise in the House today to express my concern over the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. In the past two and a half weeks, an estimated 370,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled violence in Myanmar's eastern state of Rakhine, heading towards the border of Bangladesh. Aid agencies in Bangladesh are overwhelmed by the massive influx of refugees at their doorstep. Bangladesh has the eighth-largest population and is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. An event of this magnitude will surely strain the country's social and physical infrastructure as it attempts to accommodate such a large influx of refugees.

The Bangladeshi Canadian—Canadian Bangladeshi, or BCCB, has been doing an outstanding job in raising awareness on this crisis. BCCB is a community organization that aims to promote Bangladeshi culture in Canada. In the two years since the formation of BCCB, the group has grown to over 1,500 members. Members from BCCB are actively organizing and participating in charitable events and fundraising drives to raise money and collect used clothes for the victims of this crisis.

I would like to acknowledge and thank BCCB for raising awareness of this growing tragedy and encourage others to do the same.

NAVRATRI

Mr. Joe Dickson: Today marks the beginning of the Navratri Hindu festival, which is celebrated for 10 days and nine nights beginning today, September 20, and ending on September 30.

Sharad Navratri is an important time in the Hindu calendar. Over the nine nights and 10 days, families and friends come together to celebrate the nine incarnations of the goddess Durga. Though celebrated in different ways across many communities, this festival is known as a time of fasting, worship and vibrant celebration, rich with symbolism and traditional music and dance. On the final day of the celebrations, an effigy of Ravan, the evil king, is burnt with fireworks, symbolizing the destruction of evil. The festival also starts the preparation of one of the most important and widely celebrated holidays: Diwali, the festival of lights.

I was honoured to introduce the Hindu Heritage Month Act last October to officially recognize November

as Hindu Heritage Month in Ontario, and my private member's bill, Bill 56, was passed into law on December 8, 2016. I look forward to November, when we will celebrate Hindu Heritage Month officially in Ontario, and to the many great Hindu celebrations to come.

Wishing you and your families a happy Navratri.

PARLIAMENT OF UPPER CANADA

Mr. Jim McDonell: On Sunday I had the honour to represent my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry at a ceremony commemorating the 225th anniversary of the first Parliament of Upper Canada in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Under an act of British Parliament, elections were held in August 1792 to elect a 16-member House of Assembly. The Lieutenant Governor, John Simcoe, called the assembly together for the first meeting of the new Legislature on Monday, September 17, 1792.

Several important acts were passed by the first Parliament, including the establishment of English civil law and trial by jury, the abolition of slavery, the division of the province into 17 counties or districts, the building of a courthouse and gaol in every district of the province, and the introduction of a standard system of weights and measures.

It was interesting to note that in the first Parliament, eastern Ontario had nine—or just over half—of the 16 ridings. Glengarry had two ridings—with Hugh McDonell and John McDonell, who was elected Speaker of the Assembly. The Clerk of the Assembly was Angus Macdonell. Clearly, Speaker, Upper Canada was in good hands in 1792.

If you fast-forward to 1867, when Glengarryman John Sandfield Macdonald was the last Prime Minister of Upper Canada and the first Premier of Ontario, and Sir John A. Macdonald was the first Prime Minister of Canada, clearly eastern Ontario and in particular clan Donald had a huge impact on our history.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And they're still in good hands.

FRANK LICARI

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to say a few words about Frank Licari, a resident of my riding of Ottawa South. Frank passed away last week after beating the odds for the last 16 years.

Frank was a true community builder. He cared deeply about his neighbours, the Ridgmont community and the city they all lived in. He tirelessly found ways to bring people together through street dances, garage sales, winter carnivals, hockey and skating. He continued to shovel the local hockey rink until he could no longer.

In short, Frank was the kind of person that we all like to see in our community and that we all need in our community.

I got to know Frank about 15 years ago when he was standing up for his community's concerns over the pro-

posed expansion of a local business. He was an articulate and fierce advocate. You could always count on Frank to tell you exactly how he saw things. Always authentic and genuine, what you saw is what you got.

Frank even received the Mayor's City Builder Award for his years of service to our community.

I spoke to Frank about six or seven weeks ago when he called me to alert me about something that was happening in the community, and I really appreciated that call.

Frank was a man of deep faith, loved his family and kept them close.

To Frank's wife, Madeleine; his daughters, Christine and Joanne, and their families; his extended family and his many friends: Frank will be missed. His spirit lives on in the community that he called home.

NORTHERN ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a pleasure to talk about a true success story in my riding of Nipissing. I'm talking about the film and television industry that is taking over North Bay and surrounding towns, actually for the last dozen years.

Cardinal, the popular TV series, takes place in the fictional town of Algonquin Bay, a thinly disguised North Bay. That's the because the original John Cardinal books were written by North Bay author Giles Blunt.

Carter, the popular detective series starring Jerry O'Connell, is also being shot in North Bay. Jerry truly embraced North Bay, and his playful forays into our local nightlife and wrestling circuit got the attention of TMZ.

But, Speaker, if seeing snow in September is your thing, then North Bay is your city, and Hideaway Pictures wins your Oscar. Fake snow and Christmas decorations are everywhere throughout our downtown core as Christmas movies are under way. That makes for a lot of turned heads as people drive through our town.

This weekend I chatted at length with Beau Bridges on the set of Angel Falls, one of those Christmas movies. Beau was no stranger to North Bay; in fact, he's pretty much a regular. Last year he shot several episodes of the Flower Shop Mystery series in North Bay with Brooke Shields.

We can thank Dave Anselmo, a great friend to North Bay, and Hideaway Pictures for their continued support for North Bay films.

INDIGENOUS HERITAGE

Mr. Michael Mantha: Folks, tomorrow there are going to be drums, there will be eagle staffs, there will be jingle dresses, there will be regalia and there's going to be a celebration on the front part of the Queen's Park grounds here. I invite you all to come and join the powwow that will be celebrated out there, to celebrate the welcoming of a private member's bill that I will be introducing to declare June 21 as a statutory holiday—a

recognition of indigenous day, a path to truth and reconciliation.

I've been having a lot of discussions with a lot of my First Nations communities across the province and also with the Indigenous Circle of the labour organization OPSEU. We've come up with this as part of the Truth and Reconciliation recommendation number 80. We're bringing it forward so that we can go back home and, on this wonderful day, celebrate the cultures and the true meaning and the history of what indigenous people have brought to all of our communities and how it has benefited us.

I am one who is always proud that I am a product of treaty. I have no shame in saying that, and none of us in this room should have that issue as well. We are all products of treaty, and we should have the ability to share that on that day, and that day will be June 21.

I invite you all to join in the wonderful feast and dance that will be gathered right here at Queen's Park tomorrow afternoon, starting at noon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

1520

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LIFE LEASES ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LES BAUX VIAGERS

Ms. Hoggarth moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act respecting life leases / Projet de loi 155, Loi traitant des baux viagers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Hoggarth for a short statement.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Life leases are a form of housing targeted towards seniors. Unfortunately, they are not covered by legislation in the province of Ontario.

This bill provides that life leases be given protection, similar to renters and condo owners, by providing clear disclosure to leaseholders and improving communication with their sponsors.

I hope that everyone in this House will support this bill and help protect seniors and their housing investments.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to begin by commending Jacquie Bishop for her fantastic job as the first-ever female chair of IPM.

I also want to acknowledge that yesterday we had some challenging weather conditions, and because of that, the IPM was cancelled today, but it will proceed tomorrow. Looking at Environment Canada's projections, it looks like they're going to have sun for the rest of the week, which is a good thing.

This marks a historic step forward for women at IPM and in agriculture as a whole in Ontario.

I want to thank the Ryan family for graciously lending their land for the IPM this year. I also want to acknowledge the fine hospitality of the member from Huron-Bruce, Ms. Thompson.

Now let me begin. We all know that Ontario's agri-food sector is the cornerstone of our economy. It plays a key role in our province's success. Our innovative farm and food sector employs over 800,000 Ontarians across the province, invigorating and strengthening our local communities.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy today, and will certainly play a critical role in our future. By 2050, the world population will reach nine billion people, and Ontario will be called upon to help feed this world.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was so pleased, along with everybody in this House, to be in Walton yesterday alongside the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the third party and many colleagues to participate in the International Plowing Match.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the International Plowing Match, an incredible milestone. From the very first IPM a century ago until today, this event has served as an opportunity for us to celebrate the vitality of rural Ontario and our rich agricultural roots, both of which are the cultural and economic fabrics that weave our great province together.

This annual event, hosted by the Ontario Plowmen's Association, provides a unique opportunity for farmers, rural residents and the general public to come together at the country's largest outdoor show. This plowing match attracts over 100,000 visitors each year and has a positive economic impact on its host communities.

Please join me, of course, in thanking the great community of Walton, and the farmers who generously offered their land for the event, along with the individuals and businesses who contributed to making this year's IPM another great success.

Applause.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, my notes said right here, "Wait for applause."

I'd like to take a moment to address the unusually wet weather conditions that some regions experienced this past summer, and the impact that has had on the growing season.

Our farmers have a tough job even in the best weather conditions, and they do it well. I understand the stress that this very rainy season is having on our family farms, and I know that all Ontarians share our concerns. I made it a priority to visit some of the most-affected areas to talk with producers and witness first-hand the impact these wet conditions have had on crops.

I want to assure farmers that the Ontario government is unwavering in our support for them, especially as they deal with the impacts of the wet summer months.

We're helping farmers through our range of robust business risk management programs that are especially designed to assist producers. As of mid-September, more than \$26 million in claims for replanting and loss due to wet weather have been allocated. I've directed my ministry staff to continue to ensure these programs are delivered efficiently for our producers.

While it is too soon to fully determine the extent that the weather conditions may impact yields in the growing season, my ministry staff continue to monitor the situation closely. Farmers concerned about the impact the wet weather conditions could have on their crops should contact the Agricultural Information Contact Centre.

Our farmers need and deserve business risk management, or BRM, programs with improved timeliness, simplicity and predictability that will encourage greater participation.

This summer, Ontario signed the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a new national policy framework that will help guide the future of Canada's agri-food sector. As part of this agreement, Ontario championed a comprehensive review of BRM programming that will have its early focus on AgriStability. At the same time that we're reviewing BRM programming on the national level, we'll continue to work with our industry to evaluate Ontario's Risk Management Program, or RMP. It is important that these reviews are done simultaneously to ensure that Ontario's RMP programming complements the federal suite of BRM programming. We need to ensure that both programs are working together in the best interests of Ontario farmers.

Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely clear: Our financial commitment to RMP programming remains unchanged. It will continue to provide \$100 million a year in funding. If Ontario is going to help meet the ambitious agenda laid out by the federal government's Barton report and help unleash the growth of Ontario's farm and food sector, we must ensure that our farmers have the tools and support they need in a 21st-century world. I look forward to engaging Ontario's agri-food sector as we undertake these reviews.

Now, Mr. Speaker, back to the IPM.

On my way to Walton, I visited the beautiful community of Mitchell, Ontario, in Perth county—the home of Howie Morenz, the famous "Stratford Streak"—to make an important announcement about the new partnership between the government of Ontario and Sofina Foods.

For those of you who aren't aware of it, Sofina Foods is one of the largest meat processors in Ontario and employs more than 2,400 people in 11 facilities across this province. You may be familiar with some of their branded products sold in grocery stores across the province under labels such as Lilydale, Janes, San Daniele and Mastro.

With support from Ontario's Jobs and Prosperity Fund, Sofina Foods will be able to increase its productiv-

ity, be more competitive and create 100 good jobs in wonderful Perth county.

Through our government's strategic investments, just like this one, we're supporting a strong and innovative food processing sector that will create jobs, grow our economy and support our hard-working families.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reflect on the importance of rural Ontario to our province's overall success.

I recognize the challenges that rural Ontario faces, and I have heard from rural residents across the province that they deserve equal access to our government's programs and services. While we all share the same hopes and aspirations—we all want to build a better future for our children; we all want good jobs, access to affordable housing and health care, and the ability to retire with dignity—the way we go about achieving this is different in Hawkesbury than it is in Toronto.

1530

Our government remains committed to building a strong and vibrant rural Ontario. That's why we're making strategic investments that are strengthening rural communities now and for future generations.

Our government is investing \$5 million every year in the community-focused Rural Economic Development Program—RED—to help rural communities better position themselves to attract investment, create jobs and enhance economic growth.

We've also heard from small, rural and northern communities about the importance of stable and predictable investments in local infrastructure, and our government listened. That's why our government has expanded the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, OCIF, to increase investments in small, rural and northern communities to \$300 million a year by 2019.

It's clear: Our government is dedicated to supporting the economic vibrancy of rural communities, and at the same time we're actively engaging rural Ontarians in building a strong future for our rural communities. That is why, every other year, our government hosts a rural summit which provides an opportunity for community members, municipalities and businesses to sit down and discuss how we can work together to build a vibrant rural Ontario. We'll actually be hosting our next summit in early 2018, which will focus on building a stronger rural Ontario.

Ontario succeeds when urban and rural are strong together. That's why we've made it a priority to grow Ontario's rural communities: to ensure that they remain vibrant and healthy and, most importantly, secure in the knowledge that they're a valued priority of this government.

If you haven't had the opportunity yet, I encourage everyone to visit Walton and attend this year's International Plowing Match. Walton is a wonderful community. The match is open until Saturday.

While you're there, I invite you to visit the government of Ontario pavilion and talk to our knowledgeable staff. Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has always been a very proud part of the IPM,

and this year is no different. Our ministry is delighted to share information about the first-ever Rural Ontario Leaders Awards, designed to put a spotlight on people in rural communities shaping this industry. If you know of any outstanding leaders in your community, I encourage you to nominate them for an award.

The Ontario Farms 150 signs program: We're offering complimentary Ontario 150 signs to those farms and farm families that have been connected to agriculture for more than 150 years. More information about this program is now available on my ministry's website.

To conclude, I want to reiterate that our government will continue to support our farmers, food processors and agri-food businesses to help create jobs and grow the economy.

I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't mention Peterborough. I'd also like to take a moment to congratulate Crovalley Holsteins and my friends the Crowley family from my riding of Peterborough for being honoured at the IPM this Saturday with a BMO Farm Family Award.

Again, I hope you'll take the opportunity to visit this year's International Plowing Match in Walton.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm just delighted to speak to you today about how our government is making life more affordable for our students and how we're opening the door of opportunity for so many people. You see, our government believes that attending college or university should be based on your ability to learn, not your ability to pay. That's why we've revolutionized the Ontario Student Assistance Program, or OSAP, making attending university or college a reality for so many more people—people who otherwise might not have pursued higher education because they thought they couldn't afford it.

Ontario has the highest rate of post-secondary education participation in the country, but this rate is still much lower for those in low-income families than it is for everyone else, and that's just not right. It's not fair.

The official opposition party is on record as saying that cost and income are not real barriers to post-secondary education. On this side of the House, we completely disagree with that assertion.

People should be attending college or university based on their ability, on their potential, not on how much money they make or how much money their parents make. That's why we've undertaken this largest transformation of student aid in North America: to make post-secondary education more affordable for hundreds of thousands of students. Students attending college and university this fall are the first to benefit from the new OSAP, and they are benefiting.

Some members of this House have incorrectly and very unfortunately stated in recent weeks that our program is not actually free tuition and that no one's getting free tuition under this program. Today I'm proud to inform those people that one in three full-time students in our colleges and universities is indeed receiving free

tuition. Some 210,000 students are telling you that you're wrong. This really is free tuition. I know it's hard to believe, but it is true. We're helping more students than ever in achieving their dreams; making their dreams come true.

More students have heard about changes to OSAP, they're responding, and I'm pleased to say that applications to OSAP have increased by over 10% compared to this time last year; 50,000 more students have applied to OSAP this year than last year at this time.

We're also starting to see good evidence that students from underrepresented groups are, in fact, responding to these changes. Mature students, indigenous students and low-income students have been applying to OSAP in higher numbers than before. Just this year alone, thanks to the changes we've made at OSAP, the number of students who have applied for assistance who identify as indigenous has increased by more than 35% in one year. We are all enormously proud of that.

We want even more people to hear about these changes. That's why I visited numerous campuses across Ontario last week to help get the word out and to hear stories. I met with students who told me about what this means to their future; how they are now confident to pursue their dreams.

Let me tell you about one student, Hamza Khan, a grade 12 student from Milton. He sometimes studies for up to four hours a night so he can achieve his goal of studying automotive or mechanical engineering at the University of Waterloo. It's a very difficult program to enter but he is determined to do that. Thanks to our OSAP reforms, Hamza has said that he can now focus on studying rather than on getting the money it takes for post-secondary education.

So I'm telling anyone who thinks they can't afford to go to college or university, visit ontario.ca/osap and try the OSAP calculator. I'm asking all members of this House to help get the word out. This is not a partisan issue; this is for all of our people. Please encourage the students you meet and their families to try out the OSAP calculator. By answering just four questions, they'll instantly learn how much support they might be eligible to get for post-secondary education. It might just change their life.

Members of this House need to know that OSAP is there to support hundreds of thousands of families, including middle-income families. In fact, right now, over 95% of OSAP recipients are receiving at least some of their OSAP in the form of a grant. That means they don't have to pay it back.

Even if someone believes their family earns too much money to qualify, they might be pleasantly surprised. For example, a student from a family of four with an income of \$175,000 may still receive a non-repayable grant.

People also need to know that it's not too late to apply. Students can still apply for OSAP up to 60 days before the end of the school year.

And I'm not done, Speaker. The good news continues. This year, anybody who wants to go to school next year

can apply for OSAP when they apply for university or college, so starting November 8, earlier than ever before, applications for next year.

We've also heard from students that the application process can be daunting and overly complex. In the last two years, we've streamlined that process. We've simplified the process and made it easier than ever to apply. I'm told about 15 minutes is all it takes to apply.

We have world-class universities and world-class colleges here in Ontario, so let's open up that opportunity for all our people.

We've also worked to find other innovative and progressive ways to improve the lives of young people. We know that textbooks are expensive. They can cost hundreds of dollars a year. Over the last 10 years, the cost of textbooks has risen by 80%. We don't think access to free textbooks should be limited, Speaker. That's why we've launched an open textbook library. It already contains over 200 free textbooks which can be used in actual post-secondary credit courses, and we've invested \$1 million to grow that number of available textbooks. Check out eCampus Ontario for those titles, which are available for everyone, not just students. Those are real savings.

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Speaker, in addition, starting January 1, prescription medications will be free for children and youth under age 25, which includes most of our post-secondary students. For students who are busy worrying about exams, their friends and jobs, it means they won't have that additional worry of wondering how they can afford medication should they need it.

But we also need to support students after they leave school. I often hear from students who are worried about how they are going to pay back those student loans. We know that's difficult. That's why, Speaker—I see you looking at the clock, telling me to wind up, and I will do that—we cover the interest while people are at school and for six months after, and now we're moving to a \$35,000 income before people have to pay it back.

Speaker, we're also no longer penalizing students who have RESPs. I know you do want me to wrap up. I do have to say thank you to the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, the CFS and the College Student Alliance for their extraordinary support as we develop this new OSAP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your timing is impeccable. Thank you.

It is now time for responses.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I know I speak for all MPPs when I say that I was honoured to attend the International Plowing Match, this year held in Walton, in the great riding of Huron—Bruce. Our very own PC MPP, Lisa Thompson, her team and the organizing committee did just an absolutely incredible job of organizing and

showcasing what rural Ontario, especially Huron county, has to offer.

This year's match is especially significant because it is the 100th anniversary of the IPM. When the pace of change in Canadian life is so fast, it's reassuring to know that traditions like the IPM endure. It's unfortunate, though, Mr. Speaker, that rain marred the opening ceremonies, resulting in the parade that normally kicks off the event being cancelled. For those of us who braved the weather, we are affectionately referring to the opening day as the "Mud Bowl."

How bad was it, you ask? Well, the brave at heart were soaked to the skin, and the mud and ruts were so deep that not only was walking very treacherous, but vehicles leaving the IPM in the afternoon were continually getting stuck, forcing drivers and gracious, kind-hearted volunteers to get out and push the vehicles to drier land for more traction. I'm sure there will be a sudden boost in car washes throughout that particular region.

This may be a first, but the IPM was actually cancelled today, as the minister pointed out earlier. They did that in order to protect the land and, of course, the people attending, while allowing the grounds to dry out. But the good news is, the parade has been rescheduled for Saturday.

But let's not forget that the IPM is more than a tractor competition. It's a celebration of rural Ontario, including a trade show, an agricultural expo, plowing competitions, an auction and lots of live music of various genres. Despite the bad weather, spirits were high and everyone pulled—and, I might add, pushed—together for a great event.

Next year, the IPM will be held in Chatham-Kent, so my community is looking forward again to welcoming over 100,000 visitors during the week-long event. The last time it was held in Chatham-Kent, Speaker, was in 1979.

Here's to another century of country life in Ontario and the next 100 years of the IPM.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my honour to respond to the minister on behalf of my leader Patrick Brown and my caucus colleague from Whitby-Oshawa, the critic for post-secondary education. Every Ontarian willing to work hard deserves a chance to pursue a higher education, no matter who they are, where they come from or what their circumstances are. We have a responsibility to ensure every student has a pathway to success. The future of our province depends on having an educated and highly skilled workforce, but sadly, under the Wynne Liberals, our education system leaves too many students ill-prepared for the workforce.

Under the Wynne Liberals, we have seen elementary math scores continue their downward spiral. This speaks to the broader trend of young people's education system failing to provide young adults with the skills they need to find meaningful employment.

We remain concerned about Ontario's skills gap, which is costing our economy \$24.3 billion a year. We need to start graduating students for the jobs of today and tomorrow. The Wynne Liberals spend more than \$1 billion on skills development programs, and yet youth unemployment remains well above the national average.

Many of us will remember the budget when the government first unveiled this tuition announcement. You will remember that there was some pushback and backlash over the announcement for free tuition, considering there are a variety of caveats. Allow me to share a list of who does not qualify:

- if they have money to cover their tuition in savings, RESPs or scholarships;

- if they study part-time;

- if they are studying a subject that costs more than the average, including college graduate certificates, college collaborative programs and college bachelor's programs;

- university undergraduate degrees that are above average, such as engineering, dentistry, medicine, law and pharmacy. I could go on.

Let me be clear: Our Ontario PC caucus firmly believes everyone should have the opportunity to pursue higher education and a better future, but what we need is a government that's less interested in getting the 10-second news clip and more focused on ensuring real benefits for Ontario's students for future success.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise as NDP critic for advanced education and skills development to respond to the minister's statement about the reorganized program of student financial aid, what the Liberals continue to misrepresent as free tuition.

I want to begin with a huge shout-out to the students who lobbied so effectively for these changes. It is their strong policy advocacy, their awareness of the mountain of debt facing Ontario graduates and their understanding of the barriers to access created by sky-high tuition fees that pushed the Liberals to reorganize OSAP and convert tax credits into upfront grants.

Despite Liberal self-congratulation, however, there are still too many students slipping through the cracks. While many students may be covered for a portion of their tuition, we have not seen the data to verify the claim that more than one third of Ontario's students are not paying any tuition at all. What we have seen is data showing that last year alone, the Liberal government made \$50 million in interest on OSAP loans.

With Ontario still leading the country as the province with the highest tuition fees, I hear from too many Ontario students who are worried that they won't be able to afford to pay their rent or buy their groceries. Students are experiencing record high levels of stress and anxiety when it comes to finances. More and more students are relying on private loans to fund their education, often in addition to government loans but sometimes as their only

source of support. While overall bankruptcies are decreasing, bankruptcy is increasing among those under 30, largely because of student debt.

Clearly, we have a long way to go to make sure that all students who want to attend post-secondary education are able to do so: for example, part-time students and students who do not receive any parental support but whose parental income makes them ineligible for grants.

Speaker, while New Democrats welcome the new program of financial assistance, we'll save our applause. Student leaders point out that so-called free tuition is just a temporary fix for a long-term problem. Ontario students deserve a government that is prepared to work with them to develop long-term solutions, which is exactly what an NDP government will do.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the New Democratic caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, I would like to comment on the 100th plowing match that was held this week—it's being held as we speak.

First of all, in my thank-yous, I would like to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for allowing us to use his camper for two days. You can't experience the plowing match, the IPM, unless you camp there. That is the way to do it.

1550

There have also been some questions raised: Should the Legislature really stop for the plowing match? It's a legitimate question. But to answer that question, you have to understand what it is. It takes about three years from the time someone applies to hold the plowing match in their region to the time it comes to fruition.

During that time, planning and work—and about a month before the politicians show up for their parade, construction begins. Rural people build a city centre out of tents. They build a suburb out of trailers. It's fully serviced: It's got hydro; it's got water; it's got sanitary services; it has public transportation. We saw the buggy go by Mike's trailer and thought, "Wait a second, it's the plowing match LRT."

They build this, they hold the match for a week and they have to contend with Mother Nature. Jackie Bishop: Congratulations on being the first female chair of the IPM. Her board made the decision to close it today because of the rain, because it demanded a decision. If we go back to Walton next year, it will be pastoral fields of crops. You'll never know it was there.

People say, "That's crazy. Why would they do that?" Yes, it's crazy. It's crazy like the people who plant their seeds every year, knowing full well that they might die or they might be destroyed—their crops or their animals might die. It's crazy that those people work their whole lives, and their biggest dream is that their children continue the tradition. That's crazy.

But that's why we need to stop to go to the IPM, and that's why we have to appreciate the indomitable spirit of rural Ontario. I'm so proud to be a farmer and I'm so

thankful that the Legislature actually stops for two days and appreciates that when you go back to Walton next summer, it will be farmers' fields. When you come to Verner in 2019 in my riding—if you go there now, it's one of the most beautiful farms in the area. In 2019, it will be a city built for a week, because that's what farmers do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

Before I move on, I do have to mention to the member from London West that I did hear something that I'm not supposed to hear in the House, and I want to correct it now to make sure that we don't say those things in the House. So I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate it.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 94, Highway Traffic Amendment Act (School Bus Camera Systems), 2017, will make it easier to get convictions for drivers who do not stop when lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended on a school bus; and

"Whereas responsible governments must update laws as new technology is developed; and

"Whereas numerous states and provinces are already leveraging new technology to convict drivers who put children in danger while Ontario falls behind; and

"Whereas municipalities including the city of Mississauga have passed resolutions in support of Bill 94; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has had three years to conduct consultations after a similar bill was initially introduced in 2014 and thousands of children are put in danger each day due to low conviction rates;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call Bill 94 to committee so it can be strengthened with input from the Ministry of Transportation and other experts engaged in ensuring student safety and to pass Bill 94 into legislation in order to protect our children from motorists who disobey school bus safety laws."

I approve of this petition, will sign it and give it to page Ariana.

COLLEGES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank OPSEU members for collecting this petition to improve the learning and teaching environment of Ontario's public colleges. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's public colleges, which educate over 500,000 full- and part-time students annually, are a

fundamental part of high-quality education and a growing economy; and

"Whereas our colleges face major challenges because of government underfunding and poor decisions by college administrators; and

"Whereas the exclusion of faculty from academic decision-making, and a growing reliance on an unstable precarious workforce, neglects all aspects of what it means to support the next generation of social and economic innovation in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) Require public colleges to establish academic senates, as other Canadian colleges including Sheridan College have, so financial and academic concerns are kept in balance, allowing faculty, student and administrator senators to make better policy and create higher-quality programs;

"(2) Require public colleges to enshrine academic freedom so faculty—rather than administrators—determine course methods and materials, the evaluation of students and assigned grades, thereby improving the standing of Ontario colleges internationally and improving the pathways available to college graduates for future study and employment; and

"(3) Fund public colleges to provide equal pay and benefits for equal work to all faculty, create job security for contract faculty and create more full-time faculty jobs, thereby creating a more stable and consistent learning environment for students."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Adam to take to the table.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Ted McMeekin: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas an impending Hamilton Conservation Authority decision related to new standards for arsenic in drinking water (10 ppb compared to 50 ppb for commercially bottled water), effective January 1, 2018, may result in the proposed closure of the Ancaster wells artesian water sources, we insist on retaining our legal access to the free, uncontaminated, artesian mineral water from this publicly owned land, in perpetuity;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario as follows, petition the Legislative Assembly to act to preserve our access to this vital source of free-flowing, untainted drinking water (tested at 17-23 ppb for arsenic), by keeping the artesian wells at 1109 Sulphur Springs Road open for public use, for emergency municipal purposes and to provide vital, clean groundwater to our Dundas Valley watershed."

I've signed that petition.

ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Canada is now the fifth largest organic market in the world and expanding by over 10% annually;

"Whereas the federal government adopted the Canada organic standards in 2009 for products labelled organic that are traded outside of their province of origin;

"Whereas the Canada Organic Trade Association rated Ontario lowest amongst all provinces for regulation, support and development of organic products;

"Whereas anyone in Ontario is free to use the term 'organic' on any product, even if they are not certified, as long as they do not use the logo or trade across provincial borders;

"Whereas this opens the door to fraud as the market grows, and whereas five other provinces have already enacted organic legislation to address this gap;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To pass Bill 153, Organic Products Act, 2017."

I agree with this and pass it off to page Adam.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinais: I would like to thank Mrs. Laura Therrien from Hillcrest, in Lively, in my riding, who signed this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Cole to bring it to the Clerk.

BRUCE POWER

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bruce Power provides 30% of Ontario's electricity production at 30% below the average cost to generate residential power;

"Whereas extending the operational life of the Bruce Power energy units will ensure families and businesses have long-term, low-cost stability and clean air to breathe;

1600

"Whereas the Life-Extension Program (LEP) will secure an estimated 22,000 jobs and an additional 3,000 to 5,000 jobs annually throughout the investment program, injecting billions into Ontario's economy;

"Whereas BWXT contributes approximately 1,000 high-skilled, high-paying jobs to residents of Cambridge, Peterborough, Toronto, Arnprior and Dundas and their surrounding areas;

"Whereas BWXT generates over \$90 million in payroll and procures over \$100 million in Ontario goods and services annually across its five major operating locations in Ontario;

"Whereas BWXT contributes back over \$50,000 annually to worthy charitable organizations and celebrates a strong engineering co-op program to support the mentorship and development of local engineering students;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the vital role that nuclear power plays in delivering clean, affordable electricity while contributing to a prosperous, well-employed regional economy and across the province."

I affix my signature to this petition.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to read this from the office of my good friend Rick Nicholls from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2009 the Ministry of Transportation received environmental clearance for six lanes of the 401 between Tilbury to Elgin county;

"Whereas the 401 between Tilbury and London was already known as 'carnage alley' due to the high rate of collisions and fatalities there;

"Whereas current work being done on the 401 between Tilbury and Ridgetown will reduce the road to a single lane for up to three years thus making this stretch a serious safety concern;

"Whereas there have already been four deaths, nine serious injuries requiring hospitalization and over eight collisions this summer within the one-lane construction area;

"Whereas the government of the day pledged to invest \$13.5 billion in highway improvements and has sharply increased the fees for driver permits and licence renewal fees which are used for highway maintenance and improvements;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To commit to upgrading the 401 from four to six lanes and install a median barrier from Tilbury to Elgin county."

PHARMACARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to thank the many people from my riding who signed this petition. It reads as follows:

"Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care, and people shouldn't have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medicines they need;

"Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don't have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don't take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

"Whereas taking medications as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

"Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians."

I fully support this petition. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Cole to bring to the Clerk.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Mr. Ted McMeekin: This petition has been presented by some others, so I'll cut to the chase because I want to make sure that the voices of people from Hamilton are also involved. It concludes:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

"That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare" an appropriate response.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas patients and family members seeking residential treatment facilities are often faced with long waiting lists for treatment and residential beds; and

"Whereas patients and their families need an open and transparent process to be able to quickly find appropriate and effective treatment options when a loved one is seeking help; and

"Whereas there is no central location that lists the over 180 agencies who provide residential substance treatments operating across Ontario; and

"Whereas patients and their families seeking treatment options need a database that includes where a facility is

located, what services are offered and whether a treatment centre is accredited; and

"Whereas a searchable database will give patients and their families a resource that will allow for choice and confidence in placing their loved one into treatment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To adopt Sylvia Jones MPP's private member's bill, Bill 99, the protecting patients seeking addiction treatment act, 2017."

For obvious reasons, I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Adam to take to the table.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M^{me} Nicole Shank de Hanmer dans mon comté pour m'avoir fait parvenir cette pétition.

« Le traitement équitable des personnes âgées qui cherchent un placement dans une maison de soins de longue durée....

« Attendu que les personnes âgées frêles qui ont besoin de soins de longue durée dans des foyers du Réseau local d'intégration des services de santé du Nord-Est ... ont été contraintes de quitter l'hôpital pour attendre le placement ou de rester et de payer des frais hospitaliers d'environ 1 000 \$ par jour; et

« Attendu que les personnes âgées frêles qui ont besoin de soins de longue durée à Sudbury et à Sault-Sainte-Marie ont été poussées à déménager dans des foyers qui ne sont pas de leur choix ou à des lits "provisaires" dans des établissements qui ne respectent pas les normes prescrites par la loi pour les foyers de soins de longue durée permanents; et

« Attendu que la pratique consistant à maintenir les patients dans des lits "provisaires" est contraire à la politique du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée ... qui identifie les lits "provisaires" comme destinés à assurer un écoulement continu afin que les lits provisoires soient constamment libérés pour les nouveaux demandeurs d'hôpitaux, donc »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de, dans un premier temps :

« S'assurer que les fonctionnaires du système de santé utilisent des lits "provisaires" comme étant "conformes", conformément à l'équité et conformément à la politique du MSSLD; » et de

« S'assurer que les patients ne subissent pas de pression sur les taux hospitaliers et réaliser les promesses faites à des centaines de résidents de maisons de soins infirmiers qui ont accepté de se déplacer temporairement avec la promesse qu'ils seraient replacés aussitôt qu'un lit dans une maison de leur choix est devenu disponible. »

J'appuie cette pétition, et je demande au page Cole de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

GO TRANSIT

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge."

I agree with this petition, I affix my name and I give it to Emerson.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I believe we have unanimous consent to revert back to motions and to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Jaczek is seeking unanimous consent to revert to motions. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 70 and 75 be waived on the ballot list draw of September 8, 2016.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Does the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

OPPOSITION DAY

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Patrick Brown: I move that, in the opinion of this House, all contracts with the province of Quebec for excess imported power should be tabled with, and approved by the Legislative Assembly before being signed by the Premier or the Minister of Energy.

This is addressed to the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 1. Mr. Brown.

1610

Mr. Patrick Brown: It is my pleasure to rise today in support of this opposition day motion. Today, we are asking the Wynne Liberals to stop the secrecy and give ratepayers a say on the government's attempt to negotiate secret backroom electricity deals with Quebec.

Today's request couldn't be more urgent. Just last month, the Quebec media leaked details of a backroom deal that the Wynne Liberals had been negotiating with Hydro-Québec. It was a very, very bad deal that would have lost thousands of good-paying Ontario jobs and seen Ontario ratepayers overpaying for massive amounts of electricity. It may be a good deal for Montreal, for good-paying jobs in Montreal, but that should not be the goal of the Premier of Ontario.

With the Premier heading to la belle province this Friday, the Wynne Liberals haven't ruled out the possibility of signing deals for even more power with Quebec. Despite direct questions about these negotiations, the government has evaded this question. In fact, they have continued to indicate that they're happy to continue to negotiate with Quebec, despite the fact that Ontario is sitting on a massive surplus of our own green, clean, hydroelectric power.

Ontario can't afford any more backroom deals with insiders. It was these sorts of backroom, sole-source deals that the Liberals have been signing for the past 14 long years that have made life harder and more unaffordable for Ontario families. In fact, there is a laundry list of secret Liberal decisions that have driven up the cost of hydro for families, seniors and our job creators.

One example is the gas plants, which resulted in the Liberal political corruption trial that is before the courts right now. We're still trying to get to the bottom of how those decisions were made, but we all know the government's decision to move two gas plants was done to save Liberal seats in 2011. This decision cost Ontario families billions, and the consequences are still being felt, as everyone sees them in their hydro bills.

The Liberals have quietly handed out contracts for expensive wind and solar power because 30 companies donated large amounts to the Ontario Liberal Party. To be specific, these 30 companies that got these mega deals donated—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please. I'll just remind the leader that we can't kind of suggest motive there. Go easy on those, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'll simply state the fact that the 30 companies that got mega renewable deals donated, according to Elections Ontario, \$1.3 million. I know the Liberals may heckle at this, but that's Elections Ontario: \$1.3 million to the Ontario Liberal Party.

And they may heckle at the next fact: The Auditor General has said that the government overpaid for green, renewable energy by \$9.2 billion. This wasn't about green energy; it was about bad deals, and that's why it's so important that we stop these secret backroom deals.

Last year, the Liberals signed another secret contract with Quebec for hydro power. We still don't know how much we're on the hook for from a deal secretly negotiated with Quebec. Independent analysts have pegged it as costing Ontario families between \$65 million and \$200 million. We still can't get answers, Mr. Speaker. Thankfully, the Financial Accountability Officer is looking into it, and hopefully the office will provide some clarity.

Every backroom decision this government has made in the electricity sector leaves hard-working families paying more, yet the Liberals continue to push and push with these backroom deals.

Once again, they've been caught negotiating secret deals for more power we don't need. The secret deal, that we only heard about through the media, would have sent \$126 billion to Quebec for power we do not need, while risking thousands of good-paying jobs in Ontario.

The Society of Energy Professionals warned that this secret deal could mean the early closure of the Pickering nuclear generating station and the loss of 4,500 jobs in the Durham region. That's 4,500 good-paying jobs in Durham region. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I am very, very interested to see what the members opposite from Durham region will say about this secret backroom deal and how they will vote on this motion today. We know the Liberals have an embarrassing track record of job creation, but for the Liberals to consider an agreement that would kill jobs—that would have the intended consequence of killing jobs—is something that I never fathomed from them. It is shameful. Ontario can't afford this.

Thankfully, in the wake of a public backlash from the media exposure over this leak and what independent energy stakeholders are saying, the Wynne Liberals walked back their support, saying that it's not a fait accompli and that they're only working with Quebec; they're only negotiating—anything to get re-elected, Mr. Speaker. But still, a Liberal is a Liberal. They always go back to their old ways. If they don't announce a secret hydro deal with Quebec in the coming months, rest assured that if they win the next election, they will jump at a chance to sign more. Higher hydro bills, job losses for Ontario: Premier Wynne and her Liberals can't be trusted to put the interests of the province ahead of their own.

The Ontario PCs have been crystal clear: We will not sign any more contracts for power we do not need. It's the reason that rates have skyrocketed under the Liberals; it's the reason rates will continue to skyrocket under the Liberals.

Let me quickly remind the House how much power is wasted in Ontario. In 2015, Ontario generated 145 terawatt hours of energy, but we only consumed 137. The Liberals like to turn a blind eye to this fact. While we generate way more than we need, we end up giving it away to Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio and New York. I remember asking the Premier in the House the question, "How does it feel to be the best minister of economic development that Pennsylvania has ever seen?" She may

not have liked that question, but that's the reality. We're charging Ontarians to subsidize our competitors and that's not right.

And that massive over-generation does not even include the renewable energy. Ontario already has green power: hydroelectric power. Last year, the Wynne Liberals allowed 4.7 terawatt hours of hydroelectric power to be wasted in Ontario. This is the equivalent of powering 500,000 homes. Imagine that: just spilling clean, green energy. We have to clean up this mess.

We have to make sure that families have a hydro bill they can afford, but the Liberals are dead set on signing even more deals. The Legislature should have an opportunity to review them, debate them and vote on them. We don't need this secrecy. Ontario families don't need this secrecy. It is the accountable and transparent way to bring it to the House.

That's why today we put forward this motion, which would require the government to do just that, to put any future deal with Quebec to a vote. Hard-working Ontario families shouldn't have to rely on whistle-blowers to find out details of this deal. They shouldn't have to wait to see it in a leaked document in the newspaper. It is time for Ontario families to have their say. It's time for the elected representatives in this Legislature to have a say, and it's time for Ontarians across the province to know exactly where their elected representatives stand.

So to the Liberal members in the Legislature today: Come clean, stop the secrecy and support transparency. To the Liberal members with good-paying electricity jobs in their riding—those in Durham region, northern Ontario, eastern Ontario and the Niagara region—do the right thing and stand up for your constituents. These are jobs in your riding. Vote to support this motion to help Ontario families get ahead. Stop the secrecy. Vote for transparency. It's the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to get up and speak on this hydro motion. I want to talk first about how we got into this mess. We know that it was a series of numerous policy decisions over the last two decades under both the Conservatives and the Liberals, most significantly: so-called infrastructure upgrades; the signing of fixed contracts for 20 years that had interest rates of 15% per year to those people who actually invested in those contracts; the politically motivated cancelling of gas plants to save five Liberal seats during the 2011 election; the Liberal Premier's decision to sell off Hydro One, even though 80% of the public was opposed to it, which has kind of mirrored what the Harris era was here in the late 1990s and into the 2000s—all of those things have helped us get to the mess that we find ourselves in today.

1620

If we've learned nothing else from this time, it's that the public should always be worried, be wary, when Liberal politicians—or any politicians, for that matter—negotiate secret hydro deals behind closed doors, because

these deals tend to be designed to help the political party as opposed to help constituents, the taxpayers we are elected here to support. It isn't the long-term public interest that is served when political parties do that.

New Democrats support the idea of increasing transparency and ensuring that deals involving our public hydro are not made behind closed doors. However, as the PC motion is written today, as the leader of the PCs has written his motion today, it sounds like he wants more political involvement in a very important asset that we have in this province, our hydro, something people depend on day in and day out. I don't know; I don't really see any experts around this House who come from an electricity background. I don't see any experts, so I don't know why politicians should actually be any—

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We can hold them to account, but in fact, we as politicians—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Maybe the member from Beaches–East York would like to get back on his feet.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —shouldn't be making a decision on whether something is good or bad until we have agencies—which have some flaws, like the OEB. That's why we have the experts at the Ontario Energy Board to make those decisions for us. That's why the OEB was created, and that's reason that we have it in place today.

New Democrats also support considering alternatives to costly and risky new power plant construction, including the possible importation of hydroelectric power from Quebec. However, again, import deals should be subject to independent, evidence-based and transparent review by the OEB, not by a reckless, politicized system that is suggested in the leader of the PCs' motion today. For the member opposite, the same one who urged the FAO to do a review of the Liberal government's recent deal with Quebec—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You can sit down.

It was really quiet when the Conservatives were on their speaker, and then, when the member from the third party got up, all of a sudden the activity increased over here. A little respect for the speaker. Thank you.

Continue.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. We need look no further than the Auditor General's report in 2015, when she had quite a scathing report on the energy policies of the government. I want to share some of that with you today.

What the Auditor General concluded—and I quote from the 2015 report—is, “An enormous amount of technical planning is required for Ontario to determine how it will meet its future electricity demands.” This is reflected in legislation that “requires the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to review and approve any technical plan” passed by the Ontario Power Authority to ensure the decisions are “prudent, cost-effective and consistent with the government's supply mix directive.”

She isn't saying that politicians should be making those decisions. She's saying that the OEB and the OPA are the experts and that government should be following their lead with respect to that. But over the last decade, the power system planning process has essentially broken down, and her report confirmed that for at least 10 years under the Liberal government, Ontario's energy system has not had a technical plan. It's had a political plan, but not a technical plan.

Operating outside the checks and balances of the legislative planning process, the Liberal Ministry of Energy "has made a number of decisions about power generation that have resulted in significant costs to electricity consumers." Between 2004 and 2014, the ministry issued a total of 93 directives and directions to the Ontario Power Authority, decisions about power generation that often went against the OPA's technical advice.

The auditor's report also confirms that the ministry did not fully consider the state of the electricity market or the long-term effects that different supply mix scenarios would have on Ontario's power system in making some of these decisions. The Auditor General isn't, in her report, pleased with the way that the Liberal government is ignoring the advice of the OPA and the OEB.

She went on to say, "Expensive wind and solar energy—We calculate that electricity consumers have had to pay \$9.2 billion"—Speaker, that's \$9.2 billion—"more for renewables over the 20-year contract terms" under the ministry's current program than they would have paid under the previous program.

The ministry was also directing the OPA to proceed with the costly hydro project in Lower Mattagami that resulted in \$1 billion over target as initially estimated, directing the OPA to convert a Thunder Bay coal plant to a biomass facility despite OPA's advice about costs, and the costly cancellation—about a billion dollars over that cancellation—of the gas plants.

The Conservatives want politicians to call the shots on hydro contracts, even though they know full well that they actually started this mess back under Mike Harris and under Ernie Eves. I remember deregulation. I was sitting on my local distribution company, Welland Hydro, and I was sitting on city council at the time that the directives came forward through a PC government to actually deregulate. I know that ended up costing our local distribution companies millions of dollars at each one of them to actually try to comply with all of the regulations. That money, those millions of dollars, actually should have been spent in putting some more fibre optic along the lines so that people had access to Internet in the north where they still don't have access, or making sure that the system was as efficient as it could be and keeping the hydro rates as low as they could be. I can tell you, Speaker, that before deregulation, Welland Hydro had the lowest hydro rate in the entire province. But after deregulation, that is not the case.

Even today, just a couple of months ago when the government was proposing perhaps mergers of the local distribution companies, I met with the local small guys,

Welland Hydro and Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro. They proved to me with their data and their stats that, in fact, bigger is not always better and they were running far more efficiently with less interruptions of hydro than the large companies like Hydro One.

I remember that when the market opened, I think under Ernie Eves, to actually move to this deregulated system, the price of hydro on the market went over the roof or out of the roof, and they actually had to stop it at that point in time. So the PC leader seems to have amnesia about his party's actions and about the Tory deregulation legislation that is a major part of skyrocketing hydro rates. If you recall, the Conservatives set up a market design committee. The main player on that committee came from Enron, an American corporation that had at the time committed one of the biggest corporate frauds in American history. It had designed electricity markets around the world, including Alberta, California and here in Ontario. Not surprisingly, Alberta had the same problems with high rates as we came to have here in Ontario. California had a major crisis with its electrical system after Enron designed its electricity market, and, in order to raise the market rates, manipulated supplies so low that it resulted in major blackouts in that state.

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The deregulation that originated in the US was the major cause of the 2003 blackout here in—2003; do people actually remember that blackout over a period of days, in the hot days of summer?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I remember that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, I remember it very well too.

Anyway, back in 2002, when Eves replaced Harris, he cancelled his plans for an IPO and again froze electricity rates. Even though the rates were frozen, they have continued to rise dramatically under a Liberal government—probably because they're not paying attention to the OPG and the OEB and taking the advice of their experts to make sure that we have the most cost-effective and the most efficiently run hydro system in the country. Instead, they do things for political reasons, like the sell-off of 60% of our public hydro.

Mr. James J. Bradley: And they'd sell 100%.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And they would sell 100%; that's right. That was the intent at the time. I don't disagree with that. When more than 80%—

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —of the public tells you they didn't want their hydro sold off, and for political reasons—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland can sit down for a second. Stop the clock.

It appears we're having dialogue between all the groups except me, and I believe it goes through me. Talk to me; don't talk to everyone else and have playback.

Continue.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

So Ontario was left with a failed, unfinished privatization attempt, and really no solutions at this point in time. The government has sold off the 60%; they're going to get a couple of billion dollars out of that to apply to transportation that is sorely needed, I guess, here in the GTA. But, at the end of the day, that's gone, and the revenue from that is gone—a significant amount of money.

I can tell you, Speaker, back in those deregulation days, a number of small communities actually sold off their hydros. I know Port Colborne, in my riding, sold off to Niagara Power, and, yes, they got \$12 million at the time. Well, guess what? That \$12 million is long gone. It's gone, and they have no say whatsoever in their electricity, in their energy there in the city of Port Colborne, because it's owned by a private company. That itself is problematic.

People recall the public hearings that ran all through the 2000s, just like how we had all kinds of town hall meetings about the sell-off of hydro with the Liberals in 2016-17. How do you get lower rates when you add in profits to generators, profits to distributors, profits to retailers, dividends to investors and commissions to commodities brokers? At that point in time, the Conservative minister actually left his own town hall meeting because he was so upset with the pressure he was feeling from his constituents.

Unlike the Liberals and the Conservatives, New Democrats have always supported public power. You'll remember Howard Hampton, who was the member from Kenora-Rainy River. When he was the leader, Howard had a huge campaign across this province to maintain public power and to maintain hydro rates at prices that people can actually afford.

Speaker, the Liberals have said that they're reducing the rates by 25%, but my own hydro bill has gone up \$50, from \$130 to \$180, over the last couple of months. That's without any additional usage of hydro in my home. I'm not hearing from my constituents that their hydro bills are actually going down. In fact, in many communities where people were getting a bill once every two months, they're now forced to take a bill once every month so that companies can hide that their bills are still going through the roof.

The NDP believe that hydro should be public. We certainly have made that statement. We are committed to finding a way to bring hydro back into public hands. I don't believe that that is the intent of the Conservatives. I'm proud that our plan will commit to a 30% savings on everyone's hydro bills, regardless of whether you're a residential homeowner, a small business, a rural home. The NDP would also restore non-partisan, evidence-based energy planning that puts the public interest first.

I've been pleased to speak to this issue, but I want to make it clear that we will not be supporting this motion because we do not believe that hydro decisions should be in the political arena. That's what happened with the Liberals with the sell-off, and that's what will happen with the Tories with their motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I agreed with much of what the member for Welland had to say—not everything—because she brought the historical perspective on where the problems actually originated in the province of Ontario. There isn't anything that the people across from us wouldn't like to deregulate, I think—even though now they will denounce any deregulation that it is politically convenient to denounce. We know that they love deregulation on their side.

I also want to commend the member for the work she has been doing—and it ties into this because she's trying to work on this as well—with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority as a watchdog, because the member for Welland has, on an ongoing basis, revealed to this House and to the public some of the things that are happening. I know she was listening as I was commending her on that particular initiative.

I'm going to leave a lot to some of my colleagues, but certain things came forward to me. We got accused, and justifiably so, some people would say, of implementing Conservative policy in the last election—or the election before. That was on cancelling the gas plants. The Conservatives, day after day after day, were calling for the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The third party is very active over there.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Sorry, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. James J. Bradley: The Conservatives, day after day after day, were very much involved in that. They would be calling for the cancellation of those contracts—YouTube, Facebook, any social media, plus the mainstream media—day after day. So I had people coming to me, after the McGuinty government cancelled them, saying, “You're stealing Conservative policy,” in this case—or implementing Conservative policy. I said, “Well, to a certain extent you may be correct,” because I remembered the Conservatives called for the cancellation of those contracts. But sometimes good ideas come from the other side, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing I want to mention: I heard the leader of the third party—and I wouldn't do this because I never draw this conclusion, because it would be impugning motive—say there was some connection between donations and policy. And here I was going through the very long list of donations to the leadership campaign of the Conservative leader—the first two pages were numbered companies. I heard him quote the Society of Energy Professionals, and I see they made two substantial donations to his leadership campaign. In my view, that had nothing to do with the fact that he raised it in the House—but he did try to say there was some connection there. All these numbered companies—I'd love to know who they are that made these donations. But I don't want to get distracted by this at all.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock.

I don't want to interrupt you, but the member from Beaches—East York did a little drive-by, then he went up to his seat and did it again—so it's a sit-by—and the Minister of Transportation came in so nicely and he got right into it. Let's cut it back a little bit. Thank you.

Continue, member from St. Catharines.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I also want to compliment the member for Welland. As I say, she was bringing to the attention of the House some of the situations that had arisen—the blackout that took place. The serious deterioration of the system was taking place because of a lack of investment in there.

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I think she has justifiably raised the issue of political interference in these decisions. We've seen some of that happen by perhaps all parties in the Legislature in years gone by. She's calling for a clean slate on that.

The other thing I wanted to say was that when I hear about the Conservatives' stand on gas plants, I never hear that on right-wing talk radio, and I don't read it in the right-wing newspapers. I think it's probably that they don't have the airtime or enough space to talk about the very fact that the Tories were calling for this, and the Liberals, wisely or unwisely, depending on where you live and who you are, implemented that policy.

The last thing that I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, because I want to reserve time for my colleagues, is that in my opinion, looking at the NDP benches, I think you should be getting a question virtually every day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, in my present location, I can't comment on that, but thanks for the suggestion.

Further debate? The member from Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me this afternoon.

It's amazing, how some people can rewrite history here in the Legislature to meet whatever political lines they want to distribute during that speech.

It is a pleasure to rise and speak to this afternoon's motion brought forward by Patrick Brown, the leader of the official opposition here at Queen's Park.

After the Samsung deal, we were told that there would be no more backroom deals from this government. We were told that we were going to be technology-agnostic, and when I say "we," I mean the Liberal Party of Ontario and the current government of Ontario.

The government even tried to take the gospel from the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, and tell all of us that they believed in market renewal, even though they couldn't quite tell us what that meant, and they still can't.

Yes, as Mick Jagger told us, old habits die hard, and that's what we're dealing with again here today with this Hydro-Québec deal, or the alleged Hydro-Québec deal.

On the front page of the La Presse website in early August, we heard that yet another sole-source backroom

deal had been in the works for months. For those of you who thought the Samsung contract was a sole-source backroom deal with potential, but that it could have stood to be a little more secretive, well, you're in luck. We've got the Hydro-Québec deal now, and the contracts with Hydro-Québec are almost never public. When we signed an electricity trading agreement with Quebec last year, in 2016, the price was never even disclosed to members of the Legislature and still hasn't been disclosed. When a media outlet speculated as to what the price per megawatt hour was for that contract, official sources denied that that was the price.

There's a secret way to do something, and an open and transparent way to do something. This government always takes the secret way of doing it. It always has. We never would have found out the actual costs to cancel those two gas plants—the trial, by the way, started on Friday—if the estimates committee in a minority Legislature hadn't pried them out of the energy minister's secretive grasp. Even when they did, Speaker, we got at least three more dumps of documents before we were told that we actually had all of them. And as you'll recall, many of those documents had been redacted severely.

Members of the government at the time, including some members still in the House, got up and told members of the opposition, time and time again, that we had all the documents. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? Along came another big bankers box, or 10, of documents on this issue.

So when this government addresses the Quebec deal and claims that it has all the information to which it's entitled, it simply cannot be believed. The government has too much history of hiding and covering up necessary information that keeps parliamentarians from checking their power.

All we have for the first agreement is a press release from the government, and a statement that it's going to save ratepayers money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, this is claimed without any actual details from the deal. We still don't have them.

As I've previously said, this is one government that has to show their work. They're required to show their work. We need to see it. This is one student that has been known to cut corners on their homework.

Marc Brouillette, over at Strategic Policy Economics, did a report on the first Quebec deal from 2016. What he found, using a fairly conservative price per megawatt for the projected cost analysis, was staggering.

On page 9 of his report, it reads, "The previous analysis suggests that the energy deal will cost Ontario ratepayers at least \$65 million. There are two factors that suggest Ontario's cost exposure may be higher, up to as much as \$200 million over the course of the deal."

That means that on a conservative estimate, the 2016 Quebec deal is going to add between \$13 and \$40 per customer to your electricity costs every year, and that's just one independent analyst.

Further into his report, he outlines a scenario wherein the cost of the deal actually increases to \$225 million if certain conditions are met.

I know what members opposite are saying and what they're heckling: "It's clean power. We're trying to get Ontario off of natural gas generation. Isn't that a good thing?" There are exactly two problems with that talking point. First, if you want to remove natural gas supply from the system, then just say that's what you want to do. Don't do what the Minister of Energy and other representatives of the government have done over the last year and say that you're going to take a technology-agnostic approach to procuring new energy. I don't know who could possibly believe something the Ontario Liberals say on electricity anymore, but, on the off chance that someone does, it would be nice if government actions actually followed up on government press releases.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, it shows an unbelievable lack of comprehension for how the electricity system actually works in Ontario—or doesn't work in Ontario. Once again, to anyone who has followed electricity policy in the province of Ontario for the last 10 years, that won't shock you because it's a mess out there.

For a second, let's assume that the minister was serious when he said that the existing agreement and any further agreements were aimed at getting Ontario out of the natural gas power generation business. Going back to the analysis done by Strategic Policy Economics, we find the following: "The result for 2017 is that Ontario would have only needed 0.4 terawatt hours of Quebec imports in the first six months to ensure total supply met Ontario demand."

In case that's not clear enough, the analysis later makes the conclusion really plain: "There is no basis to assume additional imports from Quebec could further reduce natural gas-fired generation from the reductions achieved in 2017. From a practical perspective, it appears that there is no GHG-emitting supply left in Ontario for Quebec imports to replace."

These two points are tied together. This is not only an additional cost to Ontario ratepayers; it provides no measurable environmental benefit.

One final quote from the report: "There is no evident basis to assume that providing Quebec a premium for all existing imports actually achieves any of the substantive emission reduction objectives of this deal. Ontarians will most likely be paying more for what they are already receiving."

The existing agreement isn't going to save Ontarians any money on their electricity bill and it likely won't do anything to reduce natural gas-fired electricity generation either. If the existing agreement won't accomplish either of those things, what could possibly make someone think that expanding the agreement the way the government intended to do before it was leaked would improve matters here in Ontario?

After years of being told that backroom, sole-sourced contracts were a thing of the past, we have further proof that we simply cannot believe this government when it comes to electricity policy. The left hand never seems to know what the far left hand is doing over there.

For that reason, the Legislature must have a role in providing oversight and actually voting on all electricity agreements with Quebec. This government has shown a tendency towards secrecy that precludes it from getting the benefit of the doubt any longer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and an honour to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin and to speak to this opposition motion that is before us today.

I understand that this motion brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition aims at having more transparency when it comes to energy contracts and how they're being reviewed. To that, I applaud the initiative; however, it is clear to everybody now—and just ask the families across Algoma-Manitoulin and across this province who are paying more than ever for hydro every month—how this government has badly managed our energy planning system for the past 14 years.

Prior to that, hail the Conservatives for coming in with their idea and opening it up to privatization, which brought seed to the next 14 years. There have been a lot of hands as far as what is going on and the problems that we have with our the hydro system.

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For that matter, you can just ask anybody on the street in regard to what they want. What they're asking for is: "Tell me what you're going to do. Tell me how you're going to do it. Come up with a plan, and tell me how you're going to reduce my hydro rates." That's what people are asking for, and it is certainly not what they are getting from this Liberal government. People in my riding are telling me, "Hey, wait a second, Mike. My bill is going up; my bill is not going down. Hey, Mike, I did invest in my home. I did change my windows; I did change my doors; I did change my appliances. And you know what? My bill is still going up. So what is the plan? What are you going to be doing? I don't want to hear the rhetoric anymore. I want to know what your plan is."

So we put our plan forward, and I've been engaging with my constituents across Algoma-Manitoulin in regard to what that plan is going to look like. But when you have an open conversation and you say, "This is what the government is telling me, and it's not working for me. What are your colleagues telling you and what is the opposition telling you?"—I don't know. I don't know what their plan is. It's not there. I can't even say that it's a bad plan because I don't even know what the plan is. So they're looking for someone to come up with some solutions.

When you look at this motion and you look at what we're debating here and what it actually says, it is much more about politicizing Ontario's energy system than increasing transparency for the public, and the public is who we need to answer to. What the Leader of the Opposition is proposing is having the House review and approve energy contracts. Well, wait a second here; I need to recall. What brought us here? What happened in

the last 14 years? We've had politicians and a government who have made poor decisions in regard to energy contracts. I'm not sure if the Leader of the Opposition actually thought through this whole opposition day motion that they are putting forward, but what you're telling this government—and I don't know if you remember, but there is a majority government across the way there—is that you're giving them *carte blanche* as far as what they are going to approve. That's certainly not what Ontarians want or expect. I'm not sure if you really thought through the way you wrote this motion, but it wasn't properly prepared. Because that's what you're doing: You're telling us that a majority government will have the opportunity to decide how the contracts are going to be done in this province going forward.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, I know. I'm shocked too. When you actually hear about it, it just doesn't sound right, because it doesn't matter who the government is—well, in the next election, it will. It will matter who the government is, in regard to who is going to be making those decisions and looking at what that plan is. That's what Ontarians are challenged with: looking at who has a plan out there, who has concrete decisions and who will be trying to make your life better.

We've put a plan out there. We've put it out for the public to see and to read and to ask questions about it. We've put a plan out there that will reduce hydro bills by 30%. We've put a plan out there that will remove or address the inefficient and unfair delivery charges that are being charged to northern communities. We've put a plan out there that will eliminate time-of-use, where if you cook toast in the morning, it will be the same price for that toast in the afternoon, where you can cook that cake or invite your kids over for a meal and enjoy that and not have to worry about your hydro bill.

We will also look at opening up and making sure that these contracts are going to be scrutinized and that they're going to be delivering real savings for Ontarians. I don't know; that sounds like a plan that's being put out there. It's not going to be easy, by any means, and with the ongoing—and thank goodness that we still have 40% of one of our biggest gems, as far as an asset that remains within our control. It's going to be a little bit harder for us to implement our plan going forward, as far as returning it to public hands, which 80% of all residents across this province are saying is a good idea. There's only one party that is looking at returning it to public hands. The other two parties are disputing in regard to how we privatize it. They've privatized 60% of it. They're saying, "Well, you didn't do it right. We'd do it another way." But they're not saying that they will reverse any of those decisions.

So what are Ontarians faced with? How are they going to actually look at their hydro bills and not feel that knot in their stomach when the mailperson comes in? They open up their envelope, and they feel that sickness in their stomach: "Once again, I have a \$600 bill," or "I have an \$800 bill."

Let me share this with you, Mr. Speaker: In a First Nations community on Manitoulin Island, M'Chigeeng First Nation, there's a small, family-owned and operated cedar sawmill there. It's a beautiful facility. I went through it. The owners there own the Taylor Sawmill. Here was their hydro bill in June. Their actual usage in dollars was \$840.23. There were regulatory charges of \$39.90. There was a debt charge of \$65.52, and an HST charge of \$488.20. They received a credit of \$300.43.

Here's the kicker: The delivery charge—now, remember, Mr. Speaker, I told you that the actual usage charge was \$840. Here's the delivery charge: \$2,809.77, for a total bill of \$3,943.19. There are 25 employees at this sawmill, a proud sawmill. They've been operating for a very long time. I have to say I've been working very closely with them, along with, actually, Hydro One, who have come to the table. We're looking at options as far as how to help them. But \$2,809.77 in delivery charges on an actual usage of \$840? Mr. Speaker, in your words, "Wow."

That's the problem, what people are being faced with. Really, that's what people are challenged with, and they want to know: "Mike, I don't care what is happening in that House. I want to know what you're going to do. I want to know how you're going to drop my hydro bills. I want to know what the NDP are doing." I am honoured, always, to sit down with them and have that discussion with them in regard to what we're going to be doing, how we are going to be rolling it out and the challenges that we're going to be faced with, because it's not going to be easy. It's not going to be an easy fix to this problem, by no means.

There is not a fix that we're going to magically put on a little piece of paper and by 2018, in the next election, guess what? Everybody's bills are going to be fixed. No. It's going to require some rolling up of our sleeves, putting pen to paper and really finding out a way in regard to how we are going to be solving this problem. But not having a plan is not going to serve Ontarians either, and really putting these types of motions forward is not going to help anybody. It just causes more confusion out there, and more frustration. People want to know what you're going to be doing. We have put our plan forward. I am proud to put our plan forward, and I look forward to knocking on doors in 2018.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, only in the Ontario PC Party can a single story from a newspaper or its website in another province, making an unsubstantiated allegation that the members know to be false, about an agreement that Ontario firmly but very politely rejected, make it into this chamber and have it be called an opposition day motion.

Let's be clear: This is a motion about something that not only didn't take place but was never going to take place, so the entire motion makes it into the realm of fiction. But there have been so many interesting and provocative statements made by the members of the

opposition that I'm just going to spend a little bit of time here examining some of those false statements. Let's just deal with them.

Let's be clear here. Ontario and Quebec have traded electricity almost as long as both provinces have generated electricity. We have done this for decades with one another. Good neighbours do that. As of 3 p.m. today, Ontario was generating 18,734 megawatts of power. That included both imported and exported electricity, which, this afternoon, were approximately in balance at just less than 1,100 megawatts.

1700

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Megawatts.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Sorry; megawatts, not megabytes.

Ontario connects to the grids of Quebec as well as New York, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Manitoba. We do so at 26 what are called intertie points. This is not new. We and our neighbouring jurisdictions have traded electricity for decades—nothing new about that.

In the last fiscal year, Ontario power consumers earned a net surplus of about \$250 million on the export of electricity to other jurisdictions, and this is after accounting for all of the transactions: those that Ontario imported, those that Ontario exported. Regardless of the price, at the end of the year, when you add up the money that you brought in and subtract the money that you paid out, as Ontarians, we came out a quarter of a billion dollars to the good. For about the last six years in the province of Ontario, Ontario consumers have benefited from a net surplus from the sales of electricity of between a quarter and a third of a billion dollars.

There were some interesting statements made by the Leader of the Opposition, and I really would like to go down a few of them. He was talking about so-called secret—I'm going to use his own words—secret back-room electricity deals with Quebec. Well, if they're so secret, why are they all posted on the IESO website—the Independent Electricity System Operator? If you have a look at the ieso.ca website, you can read the contracts. I find them to be a wonderful non-prescription sedative. There's lots of detail in them. But if you want to look at them, you can read them. They're on the IESO website.

Interjection: Vic, you should read that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham might want to get back in his seat.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was talking about the price of electricity in the province of Ontario. Now, let's be clear: Everywhere in the free world, everywhere in the developed world, electricity is a commodity that is increasing, and increasing rapidly, and for all the same reasons. The reasons are the underinvestment from about the mid-1970s until after the turn of the century in which—

Interjection: Dumb. So dumb.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham is not paying attention, and I would suggest, if he wants to make comments, he get back in his own seat.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, let's just talk about measures to reduce the price of electricity. It's been 202 days since the Leader of the Opposition instructed his backbenchers to vote against Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan. At the time, his comments were, "Well, we'll have a plan of our own." Okay. First, he promised it, and I'll use his words, "A couple of weeks away." That didn't happen. Then they said it would become clear at their party's November policy convention. And now he's been saying, "Well, you know, maybe we'll do this sometime before the next election."

Let us be clear on electricity policy and the Ontario PC Party: They have no policy, they're not going to have a policy and they don't know how to do it.

Let's bring ourselves back to the last time that this party formed government, between 1995 and 2003. While they were in power, toward their latter years, they spent nearly a billion dollars of Ontario taxpayers' money just to keep the lights on. At that time, rather than being the net exporter of electricity that Ontario is now, Ontario was a net importer of electricity. That's where the money went. You say to yourself, "Well, what actually happened when they spent the money?" What they did is, they tacked it on to what was called the stranded debt.

At the time, in flirting with the privatization of the electricity system, they had proposed doing initial public offerings: the entire sale of shares of Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One—in other words, the generator and the transmitter—and they would have all been sold. They wouldn't have kept a controlling interest, as the province did, in the move to partially privatize Hydro One. They would have sold the whole lot.

They'll talk about, for example, the salaries of executives at Hydro One and OPG. Does anyone know what the salaries are in wholly private electricity generators? They'll run between \$25 million and \$40 million a year for the CEO.

So I don't think they've got any credibility whatsoever when it comes to the prices they allowed to run away on their watch, the complete neglect to the infrastructure for power generation and power transmission, and the chaos that they left our electricity sector in when they were excused from their burden of government in the autumn of 2003.

I'd like to talk about another statement that the Leader of the Opposition made. He echoed a comment that his candidate in Durham region appears to be trying to use to stir things up in Durham, and the very premise of the comment is itself completely false—again, to use his words, that this could lead to the early closure of Pickering. This is wrong, and he knows it to be wrong, and his party knows it to be wrong. Let's talk to the people of Pickering, Ajax, Clarington—all of those people who depend on Darlington and Pickering for jobs. There is no proposal to close the Pickering generating station early, and any assertion to the contrary is completely false.

Speaker, the Pickering electricity generating station is crucial to Ontario. Let's talk about at least three of the ways in which Pickering is crucial to the province of

Ontario. Having Pickering operating allows the refurbishment of Darlington and Bruce to proceed. That work—after learning from some of the experience in refurbishing Bruce generating station's units 1 and 2—the last time I spoke to OPG, the refurbishment of Darlington unit 2, which got under way on October 15, 2016, was running 21 days ahead of schedule and is well within budget. Things will happen between now and the time it's finished, but at the moment that unit is being refurbished on time, within budget. That work is going according to plan based on the experience that the province obtained in the refurbishment of the Bruce generating station. And that Pickering electricity is essential to allowing the refurbishment of our four nuclear reactors at Darlington and the remaining six nuclear reactors at Bruce.

Another reason the Pickering nuclear generating station will not close early is because to close it early would be to disturb the global supply of radio isotopes for cancer treatment, instrument sterilization and other medical uses. The reactors at Pickering are absolutely crucial to maintaining the worldwide supply of radio isotopes, and there is no credible proposal to close Pickering nuclear generating station early, in part for that very reason.

It also ensures that Ontario maintains an ability to earn net revenue from the export of electricity. As I pointed out earlier, Ontario earns a reliable net surplus of between a quarter and a third of a billion dollars each year from the export of electricity to our neighbouring jurisdictions through those 26 interties between Ontario and our surrounding jurisdictions.

Speaker, the province of Quebec, which is in part what this opposition day resolution is about, is actually one of Ontario's major electricity purchasers. Quebec has surplus electricity in the summer. Summer is peak air conditioning time. Ontario normally imports some electricity, approximately 500 megawatts, from Quebec in the summer. In return, Ontario has some surplus electricity in the winter. Winter is peak electrical heating time in Quebec. Quebec imports about 500 megawatts from Ontario in the winter. We're neighbours. Neighbours do that—when we have a surplus of something, we share it with our neighbours; when they have a surplus of something, they share it with us. Those agreements mean that each province shares exactly the same amount of electricity generating capacity: Quebec providing 500 megawatts to Ontario in the summer, Ontario providing 500 megawatts to Quebec in the winter. It nets out. That's what good neighbours do. Why would you not want to do that? It means that from the vantage point of both Ontario and Quebec, it doesn't require capital investment to meet your peak seasonal demand. Why would you not want to do that? That's one of the reasons that Pickering will stay open until the eight nuclear reactors at Bruce and the four nuclear reactors at Darlington have been completely refurbished and returned to service, where they will serve Ontarians faithfully and reliably, providing economical, clean, efficient power for about the next 40 years.

1710

Now, this also means that neither Ontario nor Quebec need to build new generating capacity. This would obviate building power that Ontario would manifestly not need. We do trade with Quebec, and Quebec is one of our largest purchasers and largest vendors of electricity. The other part is, as I mentioned earlier, Ontario also trades electricity with New York, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Manitoba.

Speaker, there are a couple of things that the Leader of the Opposition also said. To go back to the statements that he made, that he knows to be incorrect, regarding a deal that never happened, based upon a single report in a Quebec newspaper that was based on nothing: There were no deals made and if there isn't a deal, how can it be secret? The negotiation was a normal part of business between Ontario Power Generation and Hydro Quebec. Of course, don't even pretend that the PCs understand the power business; they don't. They never have; they never will. The Leader of the Opposition knows full well—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound might want to go back to his seat. I have been more than generous.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sorry, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

As I said, the members opposite know that the assertion that there was a deal is false. They know that there is no basis for this particular opposition day motion, which, by the way, is why the government will not support it.

We also know that energy trading is beneficial, not merely to our province, but also to those with whom we trade. Let's talk about a few of the other things that the Leader of the Opposition talked about.

I'm a Mississauga member. Let's go back a bit. In 2003, the city of Mississauga elected Liberals all across the board. In 2007, by wide margins, Mississauga's Liberals were returned. In 2011, while the party opposite was trying to stir things up about the Mississauga and subsequently Oakville gas-fired peak-powered generating plants, all of the Mississauga members were returned. And in 2014, all of the Mississauga members were returned.

Now, what is this stuff—I think they borrowed an airline term to apply to it. The particular issue just didn't have an impact on the election in 2011. As a member who was out on the streets at the time, the number of people in the thousands of doors that I knocked on who mentioned the issue was zero. In that vein, following the 2011 election in which they decided to make an issue out of those two gas plants, there was a minority government which meant that for the committees that looked at that particular issue, those committees were dominated in numbers and in voting power not by members of the government, but by members of the opposition. And what did the committees find? Nothing. They didn't find

anybody had broken the law; they didn't find anything was amiss. They found nothing. They found absolutely nothing.

One of the issues that did come out of it, in the final report on the issue of those two gas plants, was that in both the town of Oakville and the city of Mississauga, there was no requirement by either the town of Oakville or the city of Mississauga to maintain their municipal plan up to date. This meant, for example, that when the land legally and ethically purchased by the proponent for the proposed Oakville gas plant, TransCanada Energy, was procured, that land was zoned industrial by the town of Oakville.

In the city of Mississauga, the land on which the former Leader of the Opposition even held campaign news events, that land was zoned by the city of Mississauga as "industrial/power plant"—power plant. The intent of the zoning by the city of Mississauga was that a power plant would be built on that piece of land in the city of Mississauga.

Now those municipal plans, both in the town of Oakville and the city of Mississauga, had been left versions old. When both the town of Oakville and the city of Mississauga objected to the proponents buying the land for the purpose of building a facility for which the land had been zoned and reserved, both of them were told by the Ontario Municipal Board, "We are looking at your official town/city plan. It was not the province that designated these as the sites. It was you, the town of Oakville and the city of Mississauga."

Indeed, during the gas plant hearings, the proponent president proposing to build the Mississauga plant, Mr. Gregory Vogt, turned over to the committee the letter from the city of Mississauga—the letter was dated in 2005—that confirmed the zoning and okayed the go-ahead and said, "You are good to go, to build your power plant on this land in the city of Mississauga."

Why were the plants cancelled, then? The plants were cancelled because the province had undertaken to do something that PC governments never did. Was there ever a long-term energy plan during the PC government? No. Indeed, was there ever a long-term energy plan under the NDP government of the early 1990s? No.

It was after the big blackout of 2003 when, as a government, this government said, "In what method are we actually going about projecting the supply and the demand of electricity?" The answer was, "The method that you're inheriting from your former governments is that you're flying by the seat of your pants."

To replace that, the province brought in a process called the long-term energy plan. The purpose of the long-term energy plan—by the way, the first version was really a long-term electricity plan; the next one was the long-term electricity, gas and renewables and transmission plan; and the third version, coming out this fall, will go deeper and broader—was to bring some order and some method into power planning and, in broader terms, energy planning in the province of Ontario.

It was that first long-term energy plan in 2010 that said, owing to the lower demand for power than was

projected using whatever data inherited from the former PC government and the existence of a new transmission corridor from the Bruce Peninsula all the way down to Milton, the electricity that those two plants would have been producing was honestly and legitimately not needed. The response was that the PCs made a blind, uncosted, reckless, blank-cheque promise and said, "We're going to cancel it." Indeed, the NDP echoed that with exactly the same promise.

The province said, "Why should we cancel power plants and get absolutely no electricity in return for the costs of cancellation?"

In return for the costs of cancellation—by the way, those costs were \$40 million for Oakville, or exactly and precisely what the Minister of Energy of the day told the House, and \$275 million for Mississauga, or exactly and precisely what the Minister of Energy of the day told the House, and that's all. Those two plants were moved to willing host locations where they were built and where they are now part of the electricity grid.

If you're going to cancel plants, first of all, it has to be for a good reason, and it was. Secondly, you might as well get some electricity, which the PCs and the NDP had proposed not to do and which the government actually did. So let's not buy any nonsense on those two cancelled gas plants. Fortunately, the report by the committee that studied them is, in fact, a public document, and is actually a pretty good read. It's quite concise.

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In the course of his opposition day motion, the Leader of the Opposition was talking about the price of electricity here in Ontario. I'd like to say that businesses will come in and ask about the relative price of electricity between the province and neighbouring jurisdictions in the Great Lakes states. Okay, so between Ontario and Pennsylvania, which one is less expensive? Ontario is a little less expensive than Pennsylvania. Between Ontario and Ohio, Ohio is slightly less expensive, but that's because Ohio is still a coal-burning state, and as Ohio phases out coal, you can expect the price of electricity in Ohio to go straight up in the air. How about Michigan? Michigan is decidedly more expensive than Ontario. What about Illinois? Illinois is more expensive than Ontario. What about Wisconsin? Wisconsin is more expensive than Ontario. What about Minnesota? Minnesota is more expensive than Ontario. So much for that, Speaker.

Quebec and Manitoba, by the way—our bookends here in the province of Ontario, our immediate east and west neighbours—have always, owing to the existence of a surplus of legacy hydroelectric generating capacity, had electricity that is less expensive than Ontario. Given that, we have not in fact seen a migration of business from Ontario to Quebec or Ontario to Manitoba; indeed, the movement has been the other way. There have been some 600,000 Quebecers who have pulled up stakes and moved here to Ontario, along with countless thousands of Quebec businesses. We welcome them—we are neighbours with Quebec—but it is, in fact, not the price of

power that attracts Quebec residents and Quebec businesses here to Ontario.

Speaker, I would like to conclude here, to just mention that after introducing the fair hydro plan some 200 days ago, a plan that the PCs voted against, right now the electricity bills being received in the province of Ontario by residential ratepayers have gone down by about 25%. So if people say, "Does the province have a plan to manage and reduce the price of electricity?" the answer is demonstrably, "Yes, absolutely yes."

The next version of the long-term energy plan this year will build on the documents tabled in this House for public scrutiny, which are all public knowledge, in 2010 and 2013. It will show a clear long-term vision for Ontario's energy system—not just electricity, not just gas, but an energy system—and it will show how this province will continue to innovate and reduce costs in our system. It will also provide extra targeted support to those who need it most, such as those who are on a low income and those who are facing particularly high delivery rates. Some of those households have seen reductions as high as 40% to 50%.

But, of course, what has the opposition done, particularly my good friends and colleagues in the Ontario PC Party? They voted against reducing those bills. They did their best to block the efforts to provide meaningful and immediate relief to Ontarians who needed it on their electricity bills, and this motion here today—a motion about a deal that never made it beyond a Quebec-based news leak, which was not on the table for discussion, let alone a decision—is what they are asking this Legislature to support. It's a reason that this Legislature should not support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's always a pleasure to rise. Speaker, I honestly cannot believe that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville spent so much time talking about the gas plant scandal, considering it's Liberal corruption that's going on trial on—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member will withdraw that statement.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We've got a gas plant scandal trial that begins on Friday, where this member continued to speak about the fact that the Liberals blew \$1.1 billion. Kathleen Wynne herself, on the campaign team, was one of the members who organized and ordered these gas plants to be cancelled. And here they are talking about the Liberal gas plant trials that are coming up. I can't believe that he actually brought that up in this Legislature, knowing that it's happening on Friday.

A year ago—actually, a year and a month ago, last October, 11 months ago—this government shocked the Legislature by doing a deal for hydro power from Quebec with the province of Quebec. They agreed to purchase

two terawatts of power. They told us that this deal was all about replacing gas-generated power made in Ontario. I remember standing in this Legislature and saying, at that very time, "We are going to lose jobs in Ontario over this deal." I remember the heckling that came from most of the same people who are sitting here right now, saying, "Oh, that's ridiculous. How is that going to cost us jobs?" I said, "If this is all about cancelling or cutting back on Ontario"—I'll give you the quote from the Premier: "replacing gas-generated power made in Ontario." Those were her words. What does that mean? I said at the time, "Well, we've got a gas generator in North Bay. Does that mean they're going to close that?" "No, of course not." We pointed out all of the small, non-utility generators that are found around Ontario. "No, no, no. This is not going to affect it." So we asked what it's going to affect, and they said, "Well, it's going to reduce costs by about \$70 million over seven years." But we asked, "At what cost? How many jobs are going to be lost in Ontario?" They continued to say none.

Recently, we did have those closures. I can't believe the member from Mississauga–Streetsville is speaking on this because the gas plant, the small gas utility, in Mississauga closed. We've got a member here from Kingston and the Islands. Her small gas plant closed. Ours in North Bay, which we said would close, closed. In Kapuskasing and other communities, eight small gas plants, including the one in Kingston, including the one in Mississauga, closed because these contracts were cancelled. We lost 100 jobs in Ontario so that the government could do this deal in Quebec for two terawatts last October. They proudly announced it. They were just beaming over it. So we lost eight plants in Ontario and 100 jobs as a result of that.

I, along with the member from Prince Edward–Hastings—we both wrote to the Financial Accountability Officer, who has agreed with the member from Prince Edward–Hastings and myself to review the electricity trading agreement that was entered last fall by this government and to tell us exactly how much it's costing Ontario; how many jobs indeed were lost in Kingston, Mississauga, North Bay, Kapuskasing and others. Speaker, it's serious enough that the Financial Accountability Officer has agreed to jump into this for us and tell the Legislature what the government won't tell us.

And now, here we are with yet another deal that's massive. This deal that lost 100 jobs in Ontario pales in comparison to what we're going to lose with this deal that they're about to enter. When is this government going to stop this assault on families, seniors and businesses in Ontario?

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House and speak on the issues of the day and specifically, today, on the issue brought forward by the leader of the official opposition that "in the opinion of this House, all contracts with the province of Quebec for excess imported power should be tabled with, and

approved by the Legislative Assembly before being signed by the Premier or the Minister of Energy.”

I wasn't scheduled to be here today. I was listening to the leader of the official opposition and, because of his speech, I'm still here. To paraphrase, he focused that the government should come clean with what they're doing with the energy sector, and to some degree—to a lot of degree—I can sympathize with that. I'm listening to the government coming back. We hear a lot of rhetoric from both sides. I think there's a bit of coming clean to do by the government—a lot—and also there's some coming clean to do with the official opposition.

The government has been in power now for 14 years. Hydro, specifically now under the Wynne government with the sale of Hydro One, the privatization of Hydro One—people are really disappointed with that because privatization is something they've come to expect from the Conservatives because that's what Conservatives believe in. They believe the free market is the best way to do almost everything.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's in their DNA.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. That's what the Conservatives want to do. That's what the old Conservatives talked about, anyway. The new Conservatives don't know whether they want to privatize or save. They need to do a bit of coming clean themselves.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: When the Conservatives tried to privatize Ontario Hydro, the Liberals fought to stop it, but the Liberals are doing the same thing. They're selling Hydro One. To prove that they're not coming clean, what was the first thing they did when they announced they were going to sell Hydro One? They removed the scrutiny of the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer. That was the first thing they did.

I distinctly remember the Minister of Finance—and again I'm going to paraphrase—saying, “Well, we're going to sell 60%, but we will still maintain control because we will be the biggest shareholder.” I'm really interested to know how well that control worked when Hydro One decided to buy a coal-fired power plant in the States. If they are still in control, then they're obviously out of control. I don't think it's a secret to the people of Ontario that the Liberal government is tired and worn out, and that it's time for a change.

But the problem is, what happens next? Because we've got the Conservatives who are—I know a lot of Conservatives, and I have respect for their position. I don't agree. I don't agree that the free market should control everything. Anybody who wants to look at what the free market does should look at gas prices in northern Ontario. That's the free market. But it's a position; it's a position that the right believes. The right believes in less regulation and the free market, but not the PCs under the Leader of the Opposition.

Miss Monique Taylor: They're different now.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, they're—

Interjection: They look the same.

Mr. John Vanthof: You can't really tell between the Liberals and the Conservatives. Neither one of them is

really telling you what they want to do, and that's why I'm still standing here, because the Leader of the Opposition said it's time for the government to come clean. Well, it's time for the Leader of the Opposition to come clean on what he's actually got in store for the hydro system, for the power system in this province, because you can't have it both ways.

We put forward a plan. Some people don't agree. That's fine. But we did put forward a plan on how we would proceed, how we would start using the proceeds of what we have left from Hydro One to regain control, so that we don't do stupid things like buy coal-fired power plants in other countries, and so that we actually use the control of Hydro One to benefit Ontarians. We put forward a position on how we would reduce hydro rates, as opposed to the Liberal plan, which is, “Do a minimum payment on your hydro credit card, and after the next election, have the big balloon payment come down.” That's the Liberal plan. That's the plan. It's a bad plan, but it's a plan.

But the people who don't have a plan, and who are demanding that the government come clean, are the official opposition. Well, if you're going to point at somebody and say, “You've got to come clean,” there's one finger pointing at them but three pointing back at you. I don't see them coming clean with their plan.

That's what really bothers me about this motion. It bothers me because, at the end of the day, what really matters to Ontarians is that they have access to affordable services and that their children aren't going to be paying huge costs for mistakes and misjudgments of—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Of politicians.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, of politicians. That's what matters to people.

If you're going to point your finger and say that you want—and I believe the Leader of the Opposition also said something about openness and transparency. Well, if you're going to call for it from the government, then perhaps you should practise it yourself. The Leader of the Opposition should have a press conference and announce whether he is in favour of the free market, or whether he's wishy-washy like the Liberals, or what he actually believes, regarding the power system in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to start off by talking a little bit about some of the points made by the member from Mississauga—Streetsville. You would think, being the PA under the Minister of Energy, that he would get his facts right.

He talked about the article in *La Presse*. The whole contract, the secret contract, was actually published, along with the letter from his minister that was sent to Quebec.

He talked about the OPG negotiating rates. OPG doesn't do the negotiation; IESO does.

He talked about gas plants, and he said, and I'm going to quote, “\$40 million,” and that it was exactly that cost. He said, about the other plant, “\$275 million,” and that it was precisely the cost. He talked a little bit about

nonsense. Mr. Speaker, this government, the Liberal government, spent \$1.2 billion on two gas plants that we've never had, that have never produced an iota of power, and he talks about nonsense. What the people of Ontario suggest is that nonsense is spending \$1.2 billion of taxpayer money and getting nothing for it.

He talked about megabytes, and one of his members had to correct him that it was actually megawatts we talk about when we're talking about power, not megabytes.

He talked about an energy plan. I would suggest to him that he might have wanted to talk to the people of Ontario, who told them not to sell. Some 85% of Ontarians said, "Do not sell Hydro One." That was not a good plan for Ontarians.

He talked about net-zero trading with partners like Quebec. Well, our great province has sent \$6 billion to Quebec and to the USA. We have paid them. That's about \$1,200 per household. I'm not certain that anybody, even Liberals who are not great at math, can suggest that it's a net-zero situation when you spend that kind of money—\$6 billion, Mr. Speaker.

I just couldn't resist bringing a few of those things to the fore and making sure we understand that that was the PA to the energy minister—and I did heckle. I apologize a little bit, Mr. Speaker. I see some over there wanting to do that to me, and that's okay. I can deal with it. Because you know when they're heckling that I'm getting under their skin and they're feeling a little bit guilty about the policies they've put on the poor people of Ontario.

1740

Mr. Speaker, the aim of today's debate is to stop this government from implementing any further wasteful and ineffective energy policies. This Liberal government has a pattern of the utter inability to foresee the negative consequences of their decisions. For example, the government went against advice from the Ontario Power Authority and in 2009 steamrolled municipal authority with the Green Energy Act—the bad decisions act—forcing utilities to buy green electricity at prices that have varied from two to three to eight times the cost of other sources of energy. They absolutely failed to foresee, repair and mitigate the cost burden of this renewables plan. At the time, they simply denied any claims of added cost burdens to consumers, arguing that the cost of their green energy plan to consumers would be minimal and that electricity bills would increase by about just 1% a year. The cost burden was never 1% as they predicted.

Their predictions are never, ever right when it comes to math. It scares the blazes out of most Ontarians when they even start talking about numbers and what they project they will be because we've heard that before.

Ontario ratepayers are, in fact, stuck overpaying—Mr. Speaker, you are one of them—\$9.2 billion for the Liberal Party's renewable energy contracts. And what for? At the end of the day, the Liberal Party's green energy scheme still continues to fail two key industry pillars of affordability and reliability. What's worse, the Ontario Liberal Party raked in \$1.3 million in donations from renewable energy companies that received these

contracts. That's some serious backroom energy deal-making, and it wasn't for the benefit of Ontarians.

Consider how the signing of these bad energy contracts has not just hurt the ratepayers but has also left Ontario behind while the rest of the world is taking the sensible path. Nuclear power accounts for 80% of electrical power in France. China has had 25 nuclear power stations under construction since 2010. That's why we should not trust this government as it prepares to strike yet another backroom deal, this time with Quebec. What if we hadn't found out? How much would that have cost? Some are suggesting \$126 billion would have been the net cost, at the end of the day, to Ontario ratepayers.

We see two major negative consequences here: energy surplus and the potential to displace domestic supply in Ontario like hydro or nuclear.

Ontario does not need eight terawatt hours of hydro power from Quebec. That's about as much power as the government wasted last year, most of it by spilling hydroelectric—they claim to be the environmentalists, the stewards, but they actually spill water, the cleanest, freest, greenest form of energy that's out there.

At least they've committed to the Pickering extension and refurbishing power reactors like at Bruce Power and Darlington, which is a good thing.

According to the Association of Power Producers of Ontario, "Ontario already has a surplus of energy, so it's very difficult to see how this deal or any other sole-source deal with Quebec could benefit the province and its ratepayers...."

"Simply put, it would be a wealth transfer to Quebec at the expense both of Ontario customers and Ontario-based companies and their employees."

Again, I say, \$126 billion that would be going out the door—we would actually be creating jobs in Quebec and taking them from Ontario.

They sometimes talk about giving away \$6 billion worth of surplus energy. Mr. Speaker, it's even worse than giving it away; we pay them to take it. How many medical procedures, how many of the 600 schools that they're closing could we keep open if they didn't give away and spend \$6 billion on power we don't need?

The statement was also confirmed by independent energy expert Tom Adams, who said, "Ontario has a vast surplus of power."

He went on to say, "We should have a competitive process here. Ontario should not be doing behind closed doors, politically motivated, politically managed power deals. We've done a lot of that in the past, and Ontario ratepayers have a sense for how that's really worked out."

The question on everyone's mind is, is the government's decision to sign a deal for additional power going to result in closing Ontario power facilities, lost jobs—good Ontario jobs that are going to go to Quebec?

At the end of the day, life is harder under this Liberal government. Life costs more under this government.

It's about trust and integrity. Do the people of Ontario trust this government to do anything right on the energy

file? Come out to my riding and ask that question and see what you find out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise today on behalf of the residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

We've seen this action by this government over and over again. They continually put their own political survival ahead of Ontario's future and the needs of its people. They have changed their leader—or their stripes, as the saying goes—but it's still the same old desperate Liberal Party unwilling to do the right thing. They are asking us to trust them again, but that brings to mind the famous old saying: "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." This government has run out of trust and we cannot trust them to do the right thing anymore, especially when it comes to the supply of energy.

The former PC government commenced their plan to close all the coal-fired plants by 2014. The Liberal Party scoffed at the plan and blindly promised to close them by 2007, against the advice of the experts. Then they promised 2011, again against the advice of experts, finally meeting the original 2014 commitment of the former Harris government, who were honest with Ontarians and based their policy on what the experts told them, contrary to what he knew was popular.

One must remember that the then Liberal Premier, Dalton McGuinty, turned down an offer from Quebec, way back, 10 years ago, for cheap, reliable, green hydroelectricity to develop his own made-in-Ontario solution. It may have sounded great back then but history has sadly highlighted what a mistake it was: More political rhetoric, with reason and advice by experts thrown to the wind. They embarked on their green energy plan—failed—with the support of the NDP, against expert advice, who reported that our system could not efficiently accept the unpredictable and unmanageable wind and solar power, let alone trying to merge this expensive power and guarantee contracts into our own electric grid.

The Quebec plan: The member from Streetsville talked about how yes, they have a surplus in the summer and we have a surplus in the winter. Why didn't they take advantage of that when it was offered to us instead of embarking on these crazy plans? He also talked about how people don't care. Well, people are caring, and we've seen that now in Scarborough and we've seen it in Sault Ste. Marie. People are getting fed up with this government. They are starting to care because they are losing their jobs and their kids don't have jobs. And you know why? The companies that are leaving are finally standing up and saying it's because they can't afford to stay in Ontario.

We have had great solutions from some of our providers. Bruce Power offered good, clean storage. This government turned them down. They offered good, cheap nuclear power. This government turned them down. So what do we have? We have an expensive system that

now nobody can afford. We have technology that is telling us we're spreading it out over 30 years. Does anybody believe that we will try to use this power in 30 year; or a technology that might take us to a new source that would be much cheaper?

Unfortunately, we're now bound by these contracts. The members opposite say we don't have a plan. We do have a plan. We plan to rein in executive salaries. We would not have sold Hydro One like the Liberals have done. We promised that we would treat the energy policy as an economic policy. But who knows how bad the system is, because we can't trust this government. Remember, they are in court because they have erased so much of the government records. They are now in court, charged by the OPP, and the trial starts next week. So it will be interesting to see just how big the mess is. Nobody really knows because the government has cooked the books and hidden the price.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to use the final two minutes here in the debate. I do want to say I have a lot of respect for the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. We don't often agree, but what I do appreciate about him is his passion and his ability to debate. But what I really, really appreciate about the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is, he knows when to apologize. He knows when to correct his record and that's something the mover of this motion should learn how to do.

The member from Welland mentioned earlier that there is a process here in Ontario when we're approving power: through the OEB and the OPG, and it's independent. I think that is critical to remember that.

I want to refer back to what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was saying about the lack of a policy on the other side. The thing that I will be really interested in, if and when a policy ever emerges from the Leader of the Opposition—which we're all still waiting for—is whether or not this motion will be reflected in that policy document. That will be an interesting thing to see, very much so.

Speaker, I can't vote for this motion. It's all politics. I encourage members on the other side, in the interests of transparency—I don't think this motion is necessary. I think it's quite evident. We rejected a deal that was put on the table, that everybody saw.

If they're really interested in transparency, we should find out why there were more ballots in the box than voters in Ottawa West-Nepean.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Going once. Further debate? Going twice. Further debate? Gone.

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It saddens me today to inform the House, and all people across Ontario, Canada and the

world, that Wiarton Willie has died. As a former organizer of the festival, I'm very saddened by that. We will do a public ceremony to honour his contribution to our great country. I'll bring further details at that time, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, I'd like some order, please. Take your seats, too.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 1. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Brown, Patrick
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Clark, Steve
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie

Harris, Michael
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Nicholls, Rick

Oosterhoff, Sam
Romano, Ross
Smith, Todd
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Baker, Yvan
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Des Rosiers, Nathalie
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han

Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill

McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sousa, Charles
Taylor, Monique
Thibeault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 21; the nays are 53.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (IND)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, Lorenzo Berardinetti
James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Jack MacLaren, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley